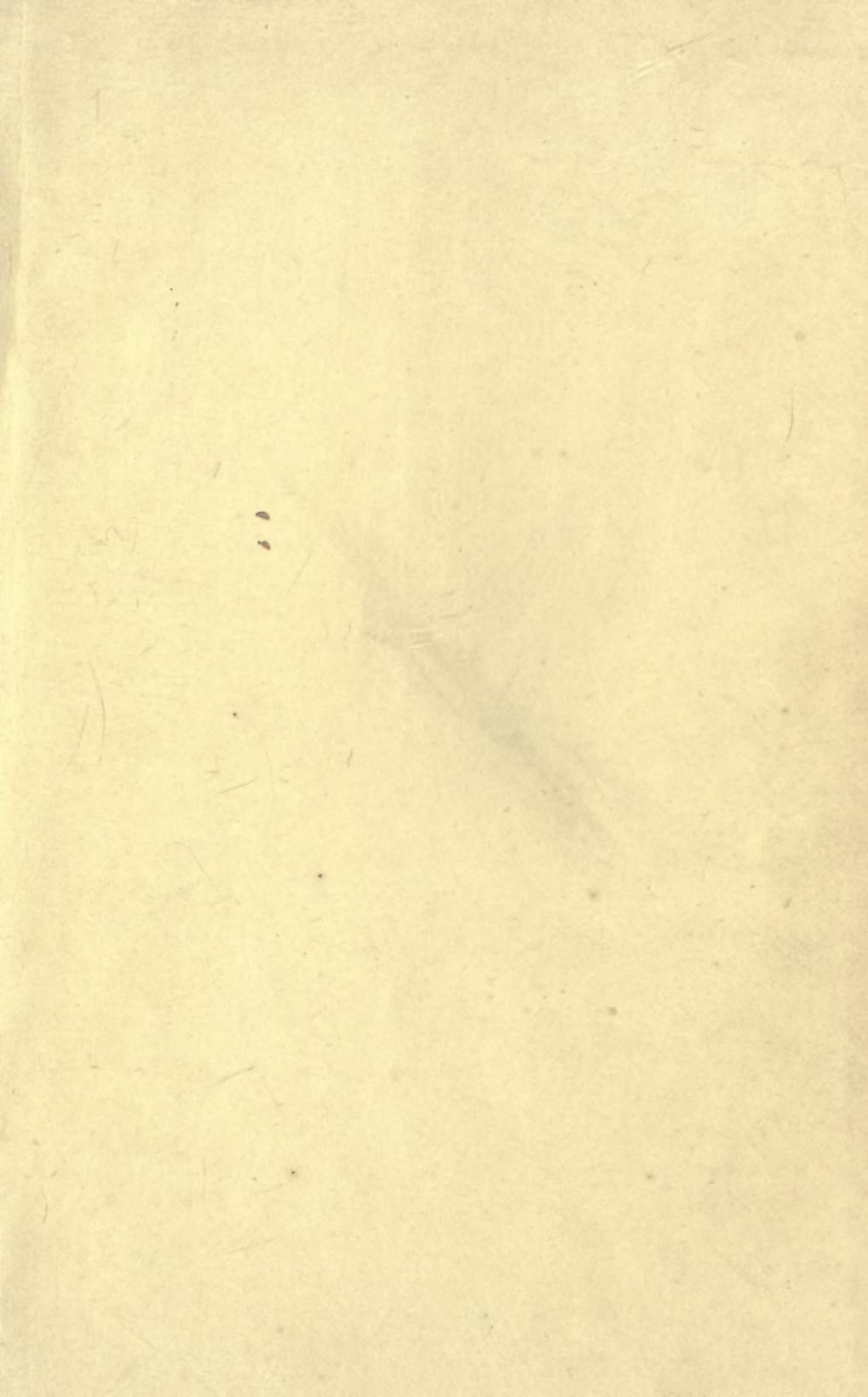
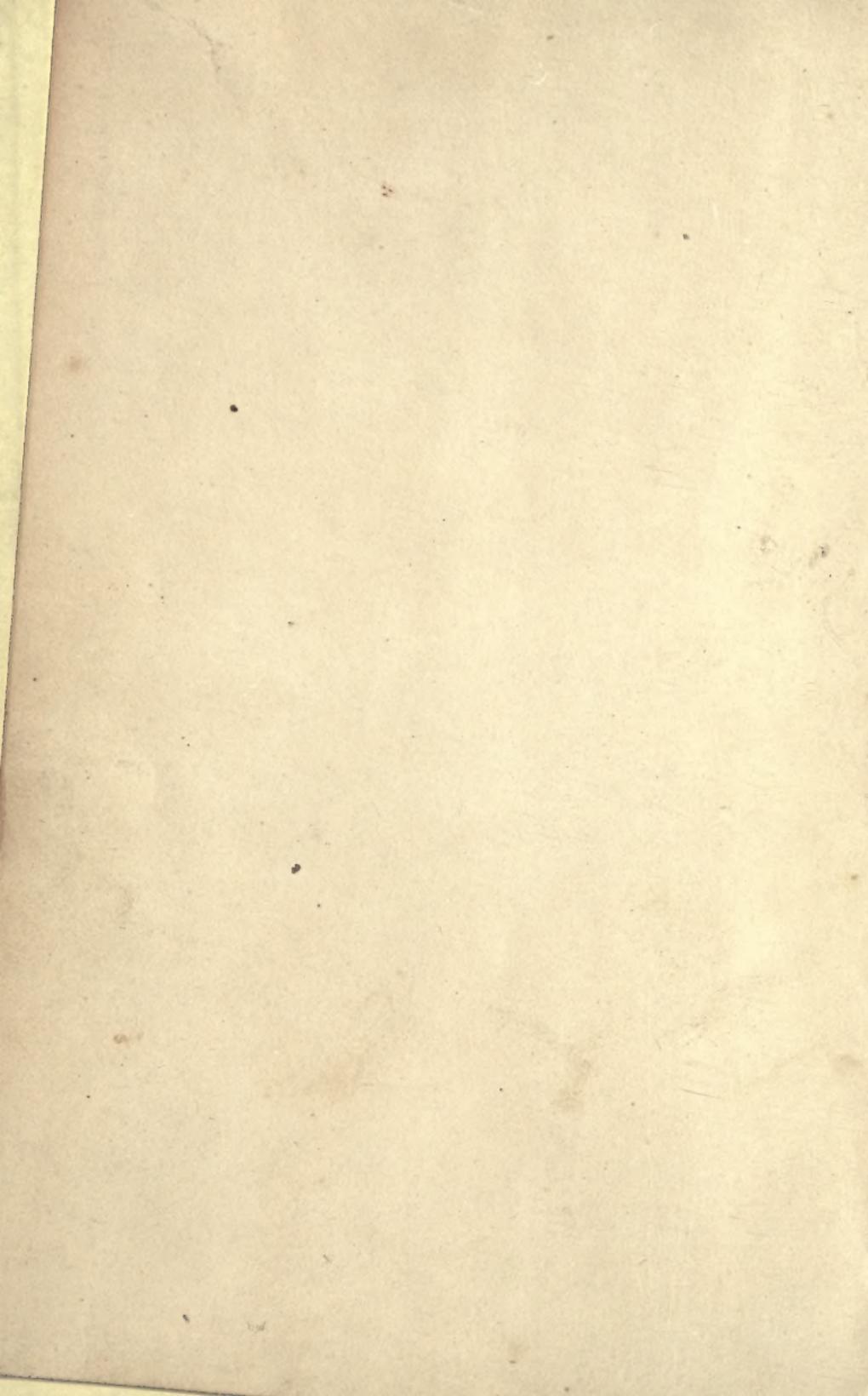




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Charlotte Dunne

Ballymanner

Steadfastly



Arabella Fleming

STORIES

OF

ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LIFE.

BY

WILLIAM AND MARY HOWITT.

WITH TWENTY ENGRAVINGS.

LONDON:

HENRY G. BOHN, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

M D C C C L I I I .



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*Charlotte Donee
Galleyman*
Nov 1853 —

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MARGARET VON EHRENBURG.

CHAPTER I.

GOSSIP OVER A NEW PICTURE, WHICH INTRODUCES THE READER TO
SEVERAL NEW FRIENDS.

IT was the brightest of bright holidays in the good city of Munich. The bells had been ringing people all the forenoon into the various churches throughout that Catholic town ; and now the gay crowds, enlivened by the brilliant costumes of peasants, were swarming out of the churches again. Rejoicing strains of martial music pealed down the broad and beautiful *Ludwig Strasse* from the alcove at the upper end, where a military band had taken its place and commenced the splendid overture to “Norma.” Students in their pretty gay scarlet, green, cherry-colour, and white *corps-caps* jauntily set upon their “ambrosial locks ;” young painters with a dash of the mediæval in their attire ; dandy young officers, with most wasp-like waists and the longest of jangling sabres ; and ladies and children, in all the elegance of their fresh holiday toilettes, attended by gentlemen in the most delicate primrose-coloured gloves, were parading about in the square before the musicians, or chatting in coquettish groups. And now the soldiers, rolling up their music-books, descend from the alcove, and playing a lively air march across the square ; and immediately almost the gay throng disperses,—numbers betaking themselves to the *Kunst-Verein* (Art-Union) exhibition of paintings, each week exhibited in one of the galleries running along a side of the *Hof-Garten*,—that pleasant summer resort for smokers, coffee-drinkers, and idlers of all kinds.

This week there were sketches by Genelli, exquisite etchings after Richter of Dresden, a portrait of a celebrated poet by Kaulbach, a study by Schnorr for a new cartoon, and more than the usual display of pleasant *genre* pictures and fresh joyous Tyrolean landscapes. It really was an unusually rich exhibition. There was a portrait, too, which attracted minute attention. It was of a lady in an old-fashioned dress meditating over a book of devotion. It was rich in colour, and in every way very clever as a picture;—but it was not alone the artistic excellence that caused this portrait to be stared at, admired, and criticized. There was quite a murmuring around the picture. “Ah, the Baroness von Ehrenberg’s picture! very clever; free handling, correct drawing, rich colouring,—really clever! rich young talent! but too English, too English!” muttered a wiry little critic, screwing up his eyes till they seemed obliterated.—“Aabella! that’s something above your hand, though: eh, my girl?” remarked a young Englishman to his blooming young bride and her sister, as for a moment they paused before the picture—“Do you know, ‘Bella, they say the lady who painted it is an Englishwoman? I’ve a vast mind to have your portrait painted by her, my ‘Bella.’”

“Alphonse! Ah! here is the picture!—Have *you* ever seen the artist-wife our dear Baron has picked up?—you men go everywhere!” lisped a grand lady of the Court, smiling sweetly upon the elegant young Frenchman who accompanied her, and who was carrying her white silk parasol. “Ah, our dear Baron; they say she is a great fright and an Englishwoman, but prodigiously clever! It was very charitable of the dear man to marry her, poor thing, for he’ll be the making of her,—and he has the charming discretion not to drag her out of her own sphere. Ah, he’s a charming man—the dear Baron! I’ll really sit to the woman myself, if she does not make one a fright like herself in her picture.” And the fine lady raised her heavy golden lorgnette.

“Just the thing to engrave for my next volume of the ‘BEAUTY’!” exclaimed an English printseller, stopping short before the portrait. “These foreigners are a deuced deal cleverer than us! Where’s an Englishman, say nothing of an Englishwoman, who would strike you out such a thing



Maryaret von Brandenburg.



as this—*par example?* Just suit the English taste too: portrait-like, yet not *like* a portrait; and still without any nonsensical allegory, which these Germans, with all their cleverness in art, are only a deuced deal too fond of! What that crabbed devil of a hand-writing means, *I* can't make out; but there stands in good English letters as large as life, '*Baroness von Ehrenberg*.' That's the name of the painter, they tell me,—make it especially go down with our public; must hear more about my lady the Baroness."

"Ah! *Monsieur*—sir! You me permit to speak to you one word!" spoke a tall military-looking gentleman of some three or four and forty, stepping forward with a graceful bow. "I very much love the English nation—"

"The devil you do, sir!"

"Yes, the devil I do, sir."

"Ha! ha! sir!" laughed the printseller. "You speak English well, 'pon my soul, sir."

"I speak English a leetle, *Monsieur*; because I half an Englishman myself. I am husband to a compatriot of yours, sir. You did speak about my lady, the Baroness, who paint this portrait, sir?"

"Yes, sir! yes, sir!" demanded the excited printseller, "wonderful woman, sir!"

"Yes, wonderful woman, as you say; rare, very rare *genie*. She make some day much—much—how say you it?—much *roar-up* in your country!"

"I believe you, sir!" interrupted the delighted Englishman; "when this appears in the new and splendid volume of the 'BEAUTY'—"

"All the world will declare the English lady have done something quite *magnifique*—it will be quite a *catastrof* in art!"

"ENGLISH LADY! ENGLISH LADY! how so, sir? how so? by George! sir, what do you mean?"

"I mean the Baroness von Ehrenberg—the very good Englishwoman of me—make much noise in your and her country."

"That's an unlucky accident, sir, allow me to inform you, *Monsieur le Baron*, a *very* unlucky accident, her ladyship's English birth; it quite alters the aspect of this matter of business."

"Sir, the Baroness von Ehrenberg have no need for matter

of business, sir. I have the honour to you salute!"—and the tall Baron turned on his heel, and was seen standing in a graceful attitude of respect, with his head bent upon his breast. This attitude, however, had no reference to the Englishman, but to a tall elderly gentleman who now approached, every one falling back before him, and pausing in the attitude of the Baron. He had a small head, and an animated manner and countenance, with eyes full of singular intelligence and light. It was his poetic and artistic majesty, King Ludwig of Bavaria. His glance fell upon the portrait we have mentioned, and a flush passed across the Baron von Ehrenberg's countenance.

"Ah, good! good! Ehrenberg," hastily observed the King; "by that clever English wife of yours: however, she has still much to learn. But, Ehrenberg, you are a lover of art; tell me who has drawn these clever sketches; there is no name: these are extraordinary designs!" And contrary to his usual restless manner, King Ludwig remained standing in perfect repose for several moments, in deep thought, before two lovely and highly-wrought pen-and-ink drawings, which, united in one frame, hung beneath the portrait.

As the King stood critically examining them, the Baron's brow grew darker and darker: "I regret that I am unable to inform your Majesty of the name of the artist," replied the Baron, speaking in his native tongue: but the Baron's countenance belied his words.

One design represented a calm glorious evening, the sun sinking behind a range of lovely mountains, and his last rays reflected in the peaceful mirror of a vast lake. Old trees festooned with luxuriant creepers, some bowing their fantastically bent stems over the waters, rose in a dense grove, on one hand. At the foot of this grove stood a hut, a perfect mass of passion-flower, vine, roses, and clematis; whilst a wild garden, a very tangle of weeds and flowers, stretched down to the lake, which united itself with the garden by hundreds of floating water-lilies. Seated upon the mossy turf of this wilderness there was a human group bathed in the sunlight of love and nature—a father, mother, and child. The parents, clasping each other's hands, gazed with tender joy upon the calm closed eyelids of the little

child as it slept upon the mother's lap, a large water-lily grasped in its little round hand. It was a group fit to typify the Golden Age.

The other design represented the same scene, but how differently! It was sunrise. A cold sun gleaming through baleful tempest-clouds; the lake lashed into wild waves, which leap and foam in anger against the fantastic stems of the old trees. Vanished are the hosts of happy water-lilies! Torn are the festoons of gorgeous creepers! The grove is shivered and shaken by winds and lightnings! The flowers and lovely weeds of the garden are torn down, matted, and beaten into destruction! Departed is the glory and the joy! The pleasant hut has been crushed by the fall of one of the old trees of the grove, which, lying across the ruin it has caused, by its net-work of branches, and by the earth torn up around, half conceals the demolished human home. Upon the sodden turf of the garden, stark and white, lies the corpse of the husband and father; the wife, in the living death of bereavement and ruin, has cast herself upon the poor corpse in a speechless agony; the child, sitting upon broken lilies and crushed passion-flowers, gazing around with a strange look of wonderment in his large eyes.

Beneath the designs were the words—

“Life also hath her hurricanes.”

“A rich fancy—an original and graceful treatment!” remarked the King, still bending over them. “There seem here a fresh hand and soul—whose are they?—not your artist-wife's? eh, Ehrenberg?” again demanded the King. But the Baron had disappeared.

This sudden disappearance of the fascinating Baron was much less a breach of etiquette than an English reader will at first imagine, as any one who is conversant with Munich is aware that artistic royalty there moves about the streets and galleries as a private individual rather than as a king. Therefore, the Baron von Ehrenberg having disappeared amid the crowd, and no longer being found at the royal elbow, may be readily pardoned.

Our friend, in fact, had vanished out of the exhibition rooms entirely, and might have been seen gloomily smoking a cigar at one of the windows of the Café Tambosi, the much-

frequented café of the *Hof-Garten*, and where, beneath the freshly unfurled leaves of the formally planted chestnut-trees of the garden, in front of the café, seated at little tables, might also be seen many gay groups of gentlemen, many of them already—in conformity with German early hours—dining, although it was scarcely much after one o'clock. Ehrenberg was a great frequenter of Tambosi's, and almost as familiar an object there as the great black beard of Signor Tambosi himself. Many an acquaintance, therefore, signed to him to come out into the brilliant sunshine; many a group of gay officers in their blue and silver uniforms beckoned him, temptingly holding up their long-necked bottles of Rhine wine; many a staid professorial-looking personage, in passing home to his dinner, caught a glimpse of the Baron's tall figure and moody brow, wondering at such an unusual expression upon his fascinatingly polite countenance, raised his hat in passing to wonder yet more when the Baron returned his salutation as if in a dark reverie.

"My excellent friend!" cried the wiry little critic, returning home with an elegant young lady leaning on his arm—"I have the most charming of news to tell you, you 'fortunate possessor of the artist-wife,' as his majesty King Ludwig designates you! King Ludwig has been inquiring everywhere for you. Those two drawings hung beneath the portrait painted by your excellent lady—and which, as a connoisseur, allow me to observe, have ten times more genius than the portrait, which is——but never mind!—*Those* two clever designs are the works of the Baroness, I learn from my good Ludmilla here; and his Majesty—inquiring with considerable interest, I can assure you, from *me*—learnt also by whom they are! but he will not believe this, as you, it seems, were unconscious of the fact.—How is it, dear friend? how is it? Let us cherish this rare young talent, my good friend. My Ludmilla explains all by declaring the excellent lady Baroness intended to try an experiment upon us all by sending them unknown and anonymously. But clear up the mystery, dear and excellent friend!"

"It would rather be for my gracious *Frau Doctorin*, if one can be permitted to use so antiquated and prosaic a title in addressing the fair enchantress Ludmilla," returned Ehrenberg, with a radiant politeness bathing every feature of his

aristocratic face ;—“it would be for the enchantress to unveil the mystery : to me, a discovery of infinite delight would it be to find in the Baroness von Ehrenberg a genius of so high an order as your words imply. As a portrait-painter, I have ever entertained the most sanguine hopes of her success,—that, I *will* confess confidentially to you ; but failure in art, my good and valued Herr Hofrath, is so derogatory to dignity, so opposed to the high standard of excellence in life which the true friends of my wife must ever desire for her, and which she desires for herself, that it has been a strong sense of duty, and a real proof of my earnest affection for her, which have prevented my seconding in any way essays in a branch of art where fail she must.” “Leave to woman her distaff and her babe,” remarked the Baron, in Latin, with a bland smile and with admiring eyes resting upon Ludmilla’s beautiful face, all unconscious that the quotation was perfectly intelligible to Ludmilla, who not only was a good classical scholar, but was also a woman keenly alive to the withering influence which all such narrow-minded reasoning as the Baron’s has upon the yet timid, because distrusted and distrusting, energies of her sisters ; and she felt a more than usual bitter contempt stir within her against her friend’s husband.

At the end of the frescoed arcade the critic and Ludmilla took their leave ; the good Hofrath calling out after Ehrenberg, loud enough for a whole group of loungers to hear,—“My compliments to the Baroness. I shall look into her *atelier* some day before long, and discover what other beautiful things she has created wherewith to astonish his Majesty and all of us !” Ehrenberg waved his hand politely, smiling ; then graciously acknowledged various raised hats among the group of loungers who had not failed to hear the words of the fussy little Hofrath.

“That confounded old gossip!” muttered Ehrenberg, flinging the end of his cigar against the stem of one of the chestnut-trees with extraordinary vigour ; “that prating old booby! if ever stupidity wandered about any old wizened face, and set itself upon any long wiry nose, it has done so upon his! Let him in his shallow brain-pan cook other people’s soup than mine—that’s all. Let him beware of poking his long nose into my nest, else mayhap it will turn

into a hornet's nest ! And Ludmilla too ! if she were not so confoundedly handsome, she should never be allowed to closet herself for hours with my wife as she does ! There's a glance of emancipation in her sharp dark eyes, and an extravagant idealism that is only fuel to the fire of my wife's absurdities about independence and perfectibility. Ha, ha ! independence !" laughed the fascinating Baron to himself. " I've my own ideas about independence—and, trust me, so also has the Baroness ! Does a woman's having a profession, however, render her more or less independent of her husband ? The much envied and attached baronial pair Von Ehrenberg will solve for themselves this mighty problem !" So mused the Baron, his face growing blander and blander as he walked along. Still he did not as usual turn down through the pleasant English garden towards his house in the Frühlings Strasse, but sauntered on and on through the beautiful park-like garden, sunk in reflections, which now were undisturbed by the meeting with acquaintance ; as all Munich, except the extreme *haute volée*, was busied over the noon tide meal.

CHAPTER II.

A PEEP INTO PRIVATE LIFE, AND AN UNEXPECTED LETTER.

MARGARET VON EHRENBURG, the artist-wife, meantime, had also been indulging in reflections. Although it was a holiday, she had not, as we have seen, dressed herself in her best, and gone out with her husband; neither did she go out with any friend, male or female, as many another lady would have done; neither did she go out with her child or children, seeing that she had none; neither did she go into her kitchen, and prepare, like her neighbour in the *etage* below, a glorious *mehl-speise* for her worthy spouse and self, or exhibit the beauty of her hands by dabbling with them after green salad; neither did she go to any church to pray, nor yet even into the fields—as was yet more her wont—to pray. None of these excellent things did she do.

The Baron had had his cup of coffee taken to him at seven o'clock, by her own fair hands, as he lay smoking a cigar, and reading a novel of Paul de Koch's, in bed. Her breakfast of tea and cold beef-steak—an English eccentricity which their maid Barbette never could comprehend—had stood on the table, in a sitting-room adjoining the chamber. Here, leaning her head upon her hand, she had sipped her tea, eaten her beef-steak, and meditated upon certain extraordinary hieroglyphics which lay before her, a singular maze of strokes and blotches: now she set the paper up before her against the tea-pot, and half closing her eyes, a smile spread itself over her countenance; then, starting up with a brisk step and animated manner, she entered her husband's chamber, to re-fill his coffee-cup, which, as she approached, he stretched out to her, his eye still resting upon the pages of his novel, and an unpleasant smile curling his lip beneath the thick black-brown moustache.

" You look the picture of comfort, Conrad!" said she, cheerily, speaking fluently in German, which was become as a second mother-tongue to her, " But that vile book—I'm

tempted to toss it out of the window, except that its poison might corrupt the freshness of the pleasant wall-flowers and mignonette that the *Frau Majorin* has just set out in the court to sun themselves ! I can't conceive how you, with all your ideas of excellence and purity, can have patience to swallow as you do, dose after dose, of such mawkish trash, all the more mawkish because the gross rubbish is gilded over with sentiment and sentimentality!"

" Margaret—queenly Margaret ! Who but you," replied the Baron, smiling, " can be *exalté* all the days of their life ? To you, my sweet soul ! is given the excitement of creative art : have patience with a poor fellow whom fate deprives of this bliss, and whose mind is harassed by untold anxieties about his own humble career. Have a little patience, stern Margaret ! if he descends from the joys of Queen Margaret's ethereal existence, to laugh at life and her drolleries in such 'gilded trash' as poor Paul de Koch ; it only gives one zest for better things. Oh, stern censoreress ! And what has my own 'busy bee' been about all these golden morning hours ? Have you been at work upon the picture of your friend Ludmilla ?—That portrait is so charming, so transcendently charming, and the bliss it is to me to see how my words have weighed with you with regard to this especial branch of your art, dear Margaret !—yes, I am most anxious about your career, in truth, glorious Margaret—as anxious as though it were the career of the Baron von Ehrenberg himself!"

" Rather more so, I sometimes fancy," laughed the Baroness, dryly, as she turned hastily into another room, her little studio.

The Baroness did not at that moment look particularly like one's preconceived ideas of a German baroness—but now-a-days there are such things as barons without baronies and retainers, and baronesses without diamonds and ermine. At all events, if our Baron had a barony, our Baroness had never seen it, and if she possessed diamonds and ermine, this summer morning she had thought it unnecessary—as certainly it was—to attire herself in them.

Our heroine looked neither English, which she was, nor yet a baroness, which she also was, but she looked very like "the Artist." She wore a long grey blouse, made of self-coloured *mousseline-de-laine*, which fitted closely round

the throat in delicate plaits, being relieved by a narrow white linen collar ; it was confined at the waist by a cord and tassel, and fell in ample graceful folds of statue-like drapery about her feet. Her hair was golden, and very abundant—many would have called it red—and the superficial observer pronounced her brow low, because this golden hair grew deep down over the broad forehead, leaving only an inch or so of it visible, white and strongly developed, above the clearly defined and dark eye-brows. Her eyes were grey and very keen, not large, but with that vivid light in them which seems to flash down into the very core of your being, yet which at times have the fire of black eyes burning in them. But she was by no means handsome ; beautiful at times she might be, but that alone from expression : except for her keen eyes, her very white brow, and the form of her hands, which, though large even for her tall figure, were formed like the hands of an antique Cupid or young Apollo, no one would have dreamed of calling her good-looking.

There was not a single ornament about her, not a ring on her hands, except the golden wedding-ring, and ring of betrothal, both worn on the wedding-finger, and considerably larger and thicker than English marriage-rings. She looked decidedly a woman of the severe style, and as she gave that little dry laugh, her eyes shone darkly, with a severe lightning within. Some way or other she seemed a little out of sorts. She looked not one-tenth-part as pleasant as she had done five minutes before, when smiling over her hieroglyphics.

From behind a green curtain she pulled forth a large canvas, upon which in brown was drawn a landscape,—a bright sunrise over the hills, with a shepherd meditating in the foreground.

“ Let me sweeten my mind,” said she to herself, “ with a few moments’ dream over my ‘ morning,’ before carrying out in my own person that sequel to my picture ‘ noon-tide,’ which all this past hour has been floating through my brain with its tempting suggestions. No, no—the dreams of pleasant morn must give place to the sternness of labour and noon-tide. Let me work truly whilst it is day, toiling for my bread, spiritual and material, in the sweat of my

brow, uprooting briars and thorns, and sowing undauntedly crops for my evening and night, and for the coming celestial day! How foolish to let my spirit madden and ruffle itself, because Conrad, in his mistaken love, would set before me, as the object of my life, merely that which my soul acknowledges as the means to the end. But deeds, not words, must convince him of this, which to myself is clear as the sun; meantime his words shall work also much good in me—would that mine might do the same by him! for a slothfulness, an apathy at times seems to my over-anxious heart creeping upon him, and the germs of active usefulness will wither and turn to naught. But will not the sole salutary means of influence be my own steadfast adherence to my code of labour? Yes, certainly; and he shall also see how willingly I open my soul to the reception of advice from him, contrary though it be to my present mode of feeling. Yes; away with thee, beloved landscape painting, and poetic allegory; for a time! I will give portraiture a fair and honourable trial, and even perhaps this very sacrifice may bring near to me those long yearned for years of Italian study which for ever haunt my imagination. Ah, if Conrad would but bestir himself about this much talked of appointment! It must be necessary to him—if not in a money-making point of view, most certainly in many others it is! How many an aching care would then silence itself in my heart! Yes—away with thee, dear ‘Morn,’ into the twilight, and forth palette and brushes—Conrad shall see a willing hand, as well as acknowledge the willing spirit!” and carolling a gay, spirit-stirring Tyrolean air, like a very daughter of the mountains, she set herself to work upon the portrait of her friend Ludmilla, a picture which she was painting rather to suit her husband and Ludmilla’s father’s taste, than her own, as it was to be a present from them all to the old gentleman.

The Baron von Ehrenberg, fascinating in the extreme, after a long and careful toilette, in which he had been assisted by his man Carl, looked into the studio, and overwhelmed her with flattering commendations—the only pleasure to her in them being a certain satisfaction in the belief that his heart was touched by her cheerful compliance with his wishes. He waved his handsome hand to her at the



Ludmilla



door as he departed, lingered there with a look of genuine love in his dark eyes, as she imagined ; and poor Margaret felt an unusual satisfaction and kindness at her heart.

A gentle calmness diffused itself soothingly through her whole artist-being, as her hand and eye mechanically wrought upon the picture before her, and Margaret von Ehrenberg was lulled into a series of those delightful waking dreams which formed a considerable portion of her happiness in life. Vision after vision, of work to be wrought out at some future day, floated through her brain, with a startling life and vividness, fresh, original, and complete, as though elaborated by hours of study, or rather complete as though worked from Nature's own hand. Then old faces looked in strangely, yet familiarly, upon her ; old voices called to her with such distinctness, that more than once she had startled herself by replying aloud to them ; the beloved words of the Bible and of the Poets vibrated through her brain, with new significance and revelation, and long-forgotten strains of music pealed around her : beds of violets, faded long, long years ago, among the mossy, ivy-covered paths of an old ruin, bloomed dazzling purple for her, shedding through every sense their delicate perfume—old green garden pathways were trod by her, accompanied by a fading wan spirit, who shone with a brighter radiance than even that of the September sun, as he burned and gleamed upon the waters of a mossy fountain, in the centre of which clambered briars and honeysuckles, around a bronze Triton, whose green outstretched arm and shell contrasted with a grotesque beauty against the festooning sprays of the orange, violet, and pale gold autumnal tints of the creepers. Then there were old fern-encircled oaks and thorn-trees in lawny dells near to the old garden, and long, long spirit-stirring talks with a mild youthful face beneath the chequered shadows. There, too, were also restless nights, and early dawns watched in at a little ivy-framed turret-window in the old house, where the room itself was redolent of rose-leaves and lavender, and the eye, when it dropped from the heavens, watching the awakening day, fell upon a grey stone terrace, where balustrades and low steps descended into the quaintest of old gardens, shadowed by elms and yew trees, above which whirled and fluttered above the morning mist the cawing rooks. All these

visions strangely mingled with the familiar sounds around her, sounds almost to her more unreal than the dream ones which filled her brain, so startlingly they smote upon her in her quiet abstraction. Here was the tramp, tramp, of holiday feet upon the pavement, the joyous peal of bells chiming through the sunny air, the flutter of pigeons' wings, as, flying up before her window into the blue heavens, they cast a bright reflection upon the ceiling which made her start, and the sound of Barbette's gossip in the court-yard, where, setting down her green pitcher, she had a good half-hour's chat with the Frau Majorin's cook, much to Margaret von Ehrenberg's indignation. Coming forth from her dream of long past days, her beloved atelier even had an unfamiliar look, as though the room were the room of another rather than herself. Those sketches of new friends upon the walls—that oil-portrait of the fascinating Baron, those studies of wild Alpine peaks and ravines—her print of a wild enchanted forest, by Lessing—her very book-case, crammed with its foreign books, all were portions of a new chapter in her existence, which at the moment had a vague sense of astonishment for her. Again her spirit sunk back into the past; the transient heavenly poetry of that old stately house and garden had vanished, the delirium of a dream of human love had vanished, but out of the dead ashes of old hopes, had, phoenix-wise, arisen the spirit of a higher purer life. The revelation of external beauty to her soul had been but the forerunner of a higher revelation, that of the spiritual. The necessity to toil for that mother who ever appeared in her mind's eye as a saint of Fra Angelico's, with a golden nimbus around her pale brows, called forth strength and powers unimagined even by her own soul. The child had been inured to toil, and to the sight of toil, in this beloved, gentle, uncomplaining mother. Now, when the whole strength of womanhood had awoke within her, and the mother's hands sank impotently with her exhausted frame, the young vigorous hands of the daughter took up the labour with success and joy internal, though the external world was dark and cold. Days and nights even were devoted to study and to daily bread-winning toil—for what she learned must be immediately turned to account: all was severely earnest—it was a life and death struggle. Though full of bitterness, it was a season of

extraordinary vigour and wholesome excitement; and the thoughts of a dark winter day, or long stifling summer one, passed over her desk and her easel in a close London room, were not among the most painful pictures that memory called forth. Large desires awoke with the struggling soul, and the monotony of their life was broken by a sudden and unpremeditated journey to Dresden, where Margaret was commissioned to copy several pictures. The first months of their sojourn in this foreign city, with the quaintness of all around them, and the absence of all pressing care for the moment, had given an indescribable charm to the memories of that time,—it was the greatest peace of soul which the mother and daughter had known for years. But there, upon a summer's morning, lovely as the one upon which the artist-wife was now dreaming, a deeper peace than that of earth had fallen upon the mother as she reclined at the open window of her chamber,—and Margaret was summoned from the Gallery where she was copying Correggio's Magdalene to find her mother dead!

Through a mist of soft tears, the quiet grave where her mother slept, with its cypress tree and white stone cross, in the lovely Dresden cemetery, shone out now in the loving heart of the daughter; but they were tears springing more over a sense of what that beautiful spirit had endured when clothed in the garment of earth, now crumbling beneath the white cross and flowers, than tears of a bitter bereavement, for to Margaret von Ehrenberg's heart her mother had never departed. Thus her whole life stood up before her, in the silence and brightness of that morning, whilst her hands pursued their work mechanically.

A sharp ring at the door of their house aroused her out of her dream. The words "*Englischer Brief*"—English letter—fell upon her ear; but so few were her existing connections with England now, that they excited little more than curiosity as to from whom the letter *could* come. She broke the seal, and in a stiff, precise, little hand, read as follows:—

“Flimbsted Manor, Christmas Day.

“My dear Friend,—If you will still permit so great a freedom from the little old woman you were good enough to

say many years ago had found a warm corner in your warm heart,—Dear *Miss Margaret*, I was going to write—for I cannot fix your grand new foreign name in my poor old head—long ago, when the news of dear Mrs. Harwood's decease reached us, a voice said to me, write to that poor young creature, alone in a foreign land, for her heart must needs want the balm of comfort poured into it, and who knows how she may not sigh after the old faces of home, even though they have never been very kind faces to her? But I did not write, although my heart bled for you. My time, as you know, is much taken up by Mrs. Lushington; and, as you may also believe, our friend does not grow less urgent with age in her requirements. The tidings of the good lady your mother's death I had trusted might have excited some of the old affectionate feelings towards you in her breast, the lively expressions of which were at one time, at all events, upon her lips; but she only shook her head as she sat fondling her little lap-dog, and said, with a sort of triumph—‘I always told you, Dorothy, no good indeed could come of that girl's strange vagaries: dragging her poor mother away from her English comforts! She is so obstinate about her silly painting, that it would be no use inviting her *here*—which, were she in England, I might perhaps do, spite of her dreadful opinions and most unladylike way of proceeding; but we will trust her pride may be humbled, Dorothy, by this judgment of providence!’ These, dear *Miss Margaret*, I regret to say, were all the words that your great-aunt and godmother spoke; but I saw her at various times during the day shake her head quietly, as she sat reading her thick volume of Jeremy Taylor, which, you may remember, she always calls for upon any occasion of unusual excitement. I must now for a short space bid you good-by, my dear, as Wilmot—you remember Wilmot?—has come to tell me the poor pensioners of the Flimbsted Bounty are arrived to receive the Christmas dole. I must talk with them in the servants' hall, and inquire a bit after their aliments comfortably, as Mrs. Lushington has got a rheumatic pain in her temple to-day, and has not left her room. We are as gay with holly and mistletoe as ever, my dear, and only rather a little more solemn than when you new us years ago.

"*July.*—You see, my dear, my epistle has lain a long time uncompleted; nay, I feel almost ashamed of sending it now, except that it will prove to you that Dorothy has not forgotten you. No, indeed, my dear, she has not; and I cannot but hope and trust that your godmother has also not forgotten you in her heart, although it is a heart so well fenced in from the troubles of the world that it is difficult to reach it. The news of your marriage reached us in a strange, round-about manner—in a letter which your godmother received from her nephew, Mr. Herbert, who is still in America. How he learnt the news there, perhaps you can tell, but we cannot. Your godmother, I believe, is secretly much pleased, but she has been very angry indeed with you for not yourself informing her of this event, as she considers in duty bound you ought to have done. 'The first time in her life that the girl ever did any thing rational she is as secret as a mouse. Had she only shewn decent respect to me in this decided and important step in life—to me who am now, I may say, her sole remaining English relative, it might have been all the better for her.' And smoothing down her rich black mode apron with much flurry of manner, and with her head very erect as she sat in her crimson-velvet chair—do you not see how, my dear?—she continued, 'But may be, Dorothy, she despises old English blood now she is so set-up with her German nobility; but the Count, or the Baron von Ehrenberg, or whatever the title may be, will curb, we will hope, those dreadful Chartist ideas which the girl got into her head, heaven knows how! and put an end to her disgraceful ideas of the "nobility of labour," about which, you may remember, she was always talking, and with which she infected her cousin Herbert, more's the pity! and which led to all that silly painting and drawing and working of both mother and daughter,—just as though such things did not degrade gentlewomen *as soon as money was made by them*. Yes, it is the best thing that could happen to the girl to have got a husband, and of an old family, too; and he must be pretty wealthy, no doubt, Dorothy, seeing he has married a portionless girl. Yes, it's the best, the very best thing that could have happened to her; for so much regard I still bear the girl—for she's a something nice about her, after all—

and for the sake of poor Isabella's, her mother's, memory, I can't quite forget her; and whenever I pictured her to myself living in that disgraceful and unprotected way—alone among those foreigners with their lawless notions—I assure you, Dorothy, my flesh used quite to creep. But the girl should have written; it is a want of respect both to me and to her husband: *he*, I am certain, would never have permitted such a breach of good manners had *he* known; but I warrant you the hussy will never have mentioned her great-aunt and godmother, Mrs. Lushington, of Flimbsted Manor! And thereupon the old lady launched out again in her wrath. Dear Mrs. Ehrenberg, I tell you all this because I would have you understand that your godmother is really wounded by your silence; and this is a proof that secretly she has a regard for you. For myself, my dear, it would have made my heart leap for joy had you condescended to remember your old friend in your mother's old home, in the hour of your happiness; but she will ever pray for every blessing to be yours which is conducive to your welfare, and to that of the partner of your life, here and hereafter.

“Your attached old friend,
“DOROTHEA WOOD.”

It was with mingled feelings that the Baroness perused this letter, arriving as it did at a moment when her mind had been filled with tender memories of those old times and old friends. Her godmother and she had always been so painfully opposed to each other, that these words of the old lady's jarred still upon her spirit with a nervous irritation which she had almost forgotten; but the expressions of real regard in the precise stiff hand-writing of that kind indefatigable Mrs. Dorothea, whose prim yet kind little face beneath the closely crimped lawn border of her almost Quaker-like cap, connecting itself with many a tale of kind acts performed in bitter times of need to her beloved and saint-like mother, obliterated all harsher memories; and, acting upon the impulse of the moment, Margaret laid aside her palette, and opening her desk indited a few lines of warm regard to the old friend of her girlhood. She dwelt only upon such things as might shed sunshine upon her, and help to soothe old Mrs. Lushington, should the letter,

as she anticipated, be read aloud to her. It was no want of respect in her, she wrote, which had prevented her informing her godmother of her marriage, but simply because she had long ceased to believe that any circumstance connected with herself could cause her any interest whatsoever. Of her husband she wrote a picture painted in warm colours of love and confidence; and though she felt a certain spice of wickedness in doing it, still she could not refrain from observing, that the Baron von Ehrenberg was, perhaps, the strongest encourager she had ever had in her art-life; and that it was, in fact, through her painting she had found her husband. Could Margaret only, as she wrote these words, have possessed a magic glass, and witnessed King Ludwig's commendation of her favourite sketches, which at that moment was passing in the *Kunst-Verein*, how grandly might she have astounded the quiet old ladies at Flimbsted Manor. As it was, however, the epistle produced effect enough upon its arrival, especially as Margaret had laughingly sealed it with great care with her husband's grand armorial bearings. Henceforth the name of the Baroness von Ehrenberg was not unfrequently repeated with complacency by the stately old lady and her quaint little companion, Mistress Dorothea.

CHAPTER III.

THE BARON VON EHRENBURG ARRANGES A LITTLE BUSINESS WITH THE AUGSBURG GOLDSMITH.

THE Baroness was very impatient now that she had written her letter, for the return of the fascinating Baron, for she intended over their little dinner-table to tell him all about the to her great event of the morning, and as much more about those connections of hers in England as it would amuse him to hear, for her mind was very full of them ; and although she and the Baron had now been married more than a year she had never in any way alluded to old Mrs. Lushington except as to an old lady, her one connection, who had cast her off because she preferred *oil* to *poonah* painting, and the being an artist to living the life of a dependent, idle, and *ennuyée* young lady.

But the Baron was blandly pursuing his walk through the English garden we know, and sauntering in deep reflection towards the bowery little bath and hamlet of Brunnthal ; therefore it was no wonder that his lady Baroness expected him in vain to the little two o'clock meal which Barbette had prepared, and where his favourite dishes, his *Leib-speise* ("body-food") as Barbette called them,—crab-soup, snails, frogs, potato-salad, and venison—were gradually losing their pristine glory.

But freedom of action for individuals as well as for nations at large, was one of the artist-wife's peculiar hobbies,—freedom in life, in thought, and in deed ; therefore she had made a compact with her husband that as regarded even such small matters as meals and engagements they should be no shackle upon each other ; and as the Baron was very fond of his own freedom, and the Baroness had a *deal* of tact, and was also guided by a real affection in her heart for her husband, she had always prevented *his* ever being put out of the way by *her* freedom of action,—and thus things had gone on remarkably smoothly. Therefore, to-day, when Bar-

bette had informed her mistress for the seventh time "that the gracious gentleman's body-food was quite spoiling, and would not her gracious lady, therefore, eat her nice little dinner," she did so with a very good appetite ; and now she might have thanked Nature and Art that such things as magic mirrors are not to be had,—for the picture then presented by her mirror, had she possessed one, and used it to look after her husband in, would have shown her the fascinating Baron under very peculiar colours, and the pain might decidedly have spoiled her digestion.

The Baron was seated in one of the many bowery nooks of the Brunnthal garden ; and with him sat an acquaintance, a rich young goldsmith from Augsburg, between whom and the Baron there always seemed to exist an extraordinary degree of intimacy. Though there was champagne on the table before them, and cigars, and they had just partaken of an excellent dinner, their countenances expressed any thing but complacency.

"It's no use, Ehrenberg," said the young Goldsmith, his dark but handsome countenance overspread with an impenetrable doggedness ; "I cannot and will not advance any thing more until those other little affairs are cleared off. I've a real regard for you,—you know that well enough ; but there is such laziness or difficulty on your part, old comrade, in paying up even the interest of those old loans that one can't avoid growing cautious, you see. Command my services in any possible way but that of advancing *fresh* monies, until you have again inspired me with a little of my old confidence. For the service that your grandfather rendered to mine in the time of Napoleon, I would willingly do all that is just : for my German pride bids me do so,—to say nothing of personal regard ; but that history of your wife's dowry having been lost through her marriage with a foreigner, and the loss of my last loan,—for, you see, I cannot avoid counting it as a *loss* ! through this losing of your wife's fortune,—considerably stagger me, I frankly confess."

"Ha ! ha !" laughed the Baron, with what Margaret would have considered, I fear, a forced and hollow gaiety,— "The cares of life, dear friend, must indeed press heavily upon you, when you commence talking in that staid and experienced manner, distrusting even so old a friend as

myself. Why, I quite expect to see your head turned suddenly grey ! There are still hopes in *my* mind that that comfortable little fortune is *not* ultimately lost. My wife is in consultation at the present time with one of the first English lawyers regarding this very affair, and he gives her undoubted reason to hope that *all*, at least, is not lost ; but as we will not calculate upon any thing in the slightest degree uncertain, we will put this entirely out of the question. My own affairs are getting gradually into the most hopeful condition,—this I confide to you as my old friend in the strictest confidence ; and there are certain diplomatic negociations now pending which will most materially influence my prospects ; in the meantime, certainly, one *is* rather pinched. We live, as you are aware, in a manner scarcely befitting my old name and title. My excellent wife is of a prudence unimagined, and being perfectly conversant with the peculiar position of our affairs at this critical moment, is only too scrupulous, if any thing, in our expenditure. She has even, as you must have heard,—for her pictures have been creating a perfect *furore* here,—been turning her beautiful accomplishments as an artist to a sordid purpose, and has been painting for money. I only this very morning, at the *Kunst-Verein*, had a most flattering proof of her success. Whilst standing unobserved in the room where her picture hangs,—a portrait, by the by, of my excellent wife herself in an old-fashioned costume,—who should come up but his Majesty ; and, unconscious of me,—who stood there, as you may conceive, in a perfect thrill of delight,—he forthwith launched into the most unbounded praises of her work : his words will of course fly like wild-fire through the city, and if my wife should choose to follow portrait-painting as a profession, why her career is at once established !—I really advise you to step into the *Kunst-Verein*, should you have the time, to-morrow morning, for you cannot fail to be delighted. And now an idea suddenly strikes me : would it not be well worth your while to have a couple of excellent portraits painted by my wife ? she even, I remember, gently hinted such a possibility this morning when we were talking over certain of our affairs. Yes, yes, the idea is hers entirely ; now I perceive the drift of her meaning, which she was too delicate more explicitly

to explain to me. Good, noble Margaret, thine truly is a generosity of soul unparalleled, unimagined!"—and the Baron was so much affected that he passed his handsome hand over his dry eyes. "Yes, yes, old and tried friend, could we not thus arrange matters to our mutual satisfaction? you advance me the little sum we were speaking of,—a mere trifle, indeed, for two such pictures as my Margaret will paint for you,—for her genius and her noble heart will rejoice in gratifying the tried friend of her beloved husband. What say you, tried and old friend?"

"I say, Ehrenberg," returned the friend, with a considerable cloud of his dogged distrust vanishing from his countenance, "that you tempt me in a most vulnerable point. I have long heard with admiration of the skill of your excellent lady: that one evening spent at your house last year has rendered me a most devoted admirer of hers, as you already know; and *my* visit this morning at the *Kunst-Verein*, where I found a knot of admirers around the Baroness's picture, inspired me with the most ardent desire of possessing some work from so rare a hand. I happen also to have two pictures of great value in my possession,—pictures left with me as a deposit for money, and which have become very dear to me. Now I feel truly that what I am about to propose is derogatory to so high a talent as that of the Baroness, your excellent lady; still, as they are very precious to me, these portraits, perhaps she might consent—and this is what I propose—that she make me such a copy of each picture, as may best suit her taste; and should she consent to this, the few hundred *Gulden* you mentioned are yours,—or rather, I should say, your excellent lady's!"

"Noble, generous man!" ejaculated the Baron, embracing his friend with every sign of the tenderest affection. "And why should we wait to consult with Margaret?" pursued he with animation: "the idea, as I already observed, was her own—suggested by the warmest and most devoted of female hearts. Here I will give you a memorandum of the affair; her own signature she will affix to it at any time you may desire it,—for instance, when you send her the pictures to copy. You will complete our happiness, also, by two concessions, I already foresee, good and benevolent benefactor! firstly, enabling me to surprise my Margaret by the goodly

sight of the few hundred *Gulden* at your earliest convenience; and also, by in no wise referring to these pictures or to her professional labours in any way before her, as she has not yet overcome a natural repugnance to the subject, as you can well comprehend that the causes for her resolution have been painful in the extreme to her. Ah, you know not how sensitively alive I am to her suffering through me the slightest wound—through me, for whom she would sacrifice every thing! Yes!" exclaimed the excited Baron von Ehrenberg, again embracing his friend with effusion, "within a year at farthest, as you gaze upon your beautiful pictures, your heart will overflow with a thousand soothing memories!"

That the affair was amicably settled between the friends we believe to have been the case, as towards five o'clock in the evening, whilst delicious music was pealing softly through the leafy mazes of the bowery English garden, the two were seen by numerous of the Baron's acquaintance in merry converse, as they returned together towards the city,—meeting, as they did so, the tide of good citizens who were streaming forth into the balmy freshness of the vast park-like garden. Alas! we fear, had the Baroness possessed the magic mirror, she would have seen many a similar painful picture!

Margaret, like an imprisoned soul, was longing for a stroll into the fresh greenness of the country, and would have wandered out by herself that afternoon, with her sketch-book in her hand, to some neighbouring quaint village, had she not from moment to moment been expecting the return of her husband. "We will both go out together into the English garden at all events, when he returns," thought she. "It would really be very charming to drink coffee at the Chinese Tower; there is music there to-night, and Conrad would be sure to meet numbers of his acquaintance there; and I will make myself remarkably handsome by putting on my embroidered white dress, which he likens so much, and do him all honour by appearing a very respectable Baroness, although a poor hard-working artist-wife! Yes, we will cast all care and ambition aside, and be right *lebens-lustig* (life-enjoying)!" So she attired herself in the embroidered white dress, and awaited the fascinating Baron's return with quite a lover-like eagerness. She was in a remarkably good humour with him, and with all the pretty things she had said

about him in her letter to her old friend ; and she had been telling him ever so many times, in imagination, about those old times which had lain so warmly all day in her heart : she longed, by his knowledge of these old memories, to link him to the former chapter of her existence, and she would in her turn get him to relate many things about *his* former life, before she knew him. Really she had been very selfishly wrapt up in her own concerns, never to have solicited his confidence !—and he so devoted to her, so proud of her ! Her heart quite reproached her with a thousand shortcomings : therefore, when the peculiar ring that always announced her husband's arrival, sounded, she anticipated Barbette, and darted out to open the door to him, herself. It was like a gleam of sunshine streaming out of the doorway toward them as the door flew open, thought at least, if not her husband, her husband's companion, the young Augsburg goldsmith, as she stood there in her white dress, its soft drapery shrouding her commanding figure, and her usually somewhat severe features softened by a gush of unmistakeable love ;—in truth, altogether there was a magical charm thrown around her.

" We are come to fetch you to the Opera, Margaret," said her husband, in his most winning manner. " There is the new opera which I'm most anxious to hear, and I've fallen in with my old friend Herr Xavier, you see,—I want you both to know more of each other ; and all the world will be at the Opera,—several people, by the by, Margaret, whom I am particularly desirous you should see : so let us be off immediately. We've already met several pretty rose-buds tripping along Opera-ways, lorgnette in hand, and silken hoods upon their heads. Put on your pretty hood, my majestic lily Margaret," cried the Baron, in high glee, pressing most gallantly her white statue-like hand to his lips.

The poor Baroness, spite of all the real love in her heart, could not help swallowing, with a sort of choking sensation, her disappointment : the evening was so beautiful, the woods so fresh and calm : the Opera to her in summer, with its glare, its oppressive atmosphere, its crowds of people, was always odious, and most especially so when the music would be that of a composer whose style and feeling in every way were opposed to her code of art. " But Conrad so often is will-

ing to sacrifice his comfort to mine!" said she in heart, with a pleasant little self-deception; and though she made no reply, and felt, as we have said, a hasty choking sensation in her throat for a moment, she was immediately, however, the gracious hostess and the agreeable, though perhaps no longer the *beaming* wife, as she welcomed the guest Herr Xavier, the Augsburg goldsmith, in the small baronial saloon; here a French time-piece informing them that still a half-hour remained before the commencement of the opera. Margaret, who was a true English woman in her love of tea, and prided herself upon presenting it in regular English fashion—properly *strong*, and without an elegant little rum-decanter on the tea-tray, as is usually seen in German houses,—ordered Barbette to bring in this, at least to her, most agreeable refreshment. But the Baron was too elated to care either for tea, or nectar even, had it been presented to him at that moment, and rattled away in such amazing spirits, that Margaret, whose nerves were usually responsive to all around her, soon caught the infection, and was as gay even as himself. Herr Xavier sipped the strong tea with considerable discomfort, but consoled himself with gazing at the Baroness with such looks of sentimental admiration as only a German would have permitted to himself, and with praising her picture in the *Kunst-Verein*, and the sketches which hung in their sitting-room, in such warm terms that Margaret, whose great weakness—shall we confess it?—was a certain artistic, not personal, vanity, and who, therefore, never having noticed the looks bestowed upon herself as well as upon her pictures, swallowed this flattery with even a better grace than she had swallowed her disappointment of the rural tête-à-tête walk with her delightful Baron. "Really," said she to herself, "this Herr Xavier has unusual penetration and feeling for art,"—and "*feeling for art*" being the key to Margaret's good graces, she almost unconsciously grew as fascinating and irresistible as the Baron himself.

Another thing, nay, we should say several things, conducted also to keep the Baroness in uncommonly good-humour. Her husband, as they walked through the sunny streets to the pretty theatre, whose frescoed pediment glowed in the rich rays of the evening sunlight—rays which were

also bathing every angle and sculptured arch and column of the beautiful, unique art-city in a flood of roseate light, itself a circumstance to set Margaret's nerves in a delicious thrill,—her husband, we say, as they walked along, was telling her, according to his prescribed rule of action, and with every appearance of delight, of the success of her picture, which he had witnessed that forenoon in the *Kunst-Verein*: had he breathed a word about the sketches having attracted all the royal notice, we will not answer for what absurdity, even there and then in front of the royal palace itself, the poor artist might not have been guilty of. But, though she was pleased that the portrait was pronounced good, still a secret little sigh heaved itself up in the deepest recesses of her heart,—“Ah! my dear little landscapes, then you are *not* good as I imagined! unknown and poor you have met with a truthful judgment. Yes, Conrad, you must be right, my landscape allegory may be my pet insanity after all!” and for a few moments she sunk into a silence—Herr Xavier thinking her gravity more beautiful than her mirth.

It was the poor Baron now who met with a disappointment. The new opera had suddenly been changed for Fidelio. He was terribly put out about the loss of the new opera; “Fidelio,” he declared, he had heard a thousand times at the very least; yes, yes, every one knew it was very beautiful, of course, and all that sort of thing, but he had a hearty good mind to change their tickets,—better a million times go to the little Au Theatre—there you would hear and see something not so hacknied: or even a stroll in the English Garden would be pleasanter than the hot crowded Opera House, which he remembered his dear Margaret always hated in summer, where every tone of the singers, every grimace, was sickening. But what thought his charming Margaret?—he would be guided by her—yes, he and Herr Xavier would be guided by her entirely.

Now the Baroness, having an extreme love of “Fidelio,” and not having heard it “a thousand times” actually, considering that she had had all the trouble of coming to the theatre, desired to stay where she was. It was very selfish, no doubt, in the Baroness, but we do not pretend that our fascinating Baron’s lady is the faultless heroine of romance; therefore, now it was for the poor Baron to politely smother

his disappointment, which of course, whatever it might cost him, he would have done with unusual grace, had it not been rendered somewhat easier to him to bear by the vision which swept past him—the elegant near-sighted court-lady, attended by the young French *Attaché*.

Margaret, with unpardonable insensibility to her husband's sufferings, soon apparently forgot all around her, whilst listening to the spirit-stirring strains of Beethoven. The noble and strong devotion of Fidelio caught up her soul with it, bearing it away into the pure atmosphere of ideal art. With Margaret, religion, and art, and poetry were pretty much one and the same thing—in the depths of nature's solitudes, in the quiet of her own studio, in a church, or, as now, in the Opera, her spirit would at times, swayed by some magical and mighty external influence, flee upon wings of intensest aspiration and love up to the very gates of heaven, where, flinging itself down in the golden atmosphere of bliss, it would worship in unutterable joy and humility: at such moments she felt herself capable of any act of heroism, of any act of devotion; and never was her love for the fascinating Baron so strong as at such times. Her face, though not handsome by any means, was singularly capable of expressing emotion,—and now she sat with a countenance pale as marble, her dark eyes dilating with an almost unearthly intensity, her bosom heaving with her quickly-drawn and tremulous breath, and her hands convulsively grasped in each other.

Her husband, leaving her to the care of his friend after a short time, went to pay his *devoirs* to the near-sighted court-lady. He was extremely anxious that his dear Margaret should exercise her clever pencil upon the fashionable lady's fashionable countenance. The court-lady, who, near-sighted as she appeared to be, was nevertheless perfectly well aware of all that was going on among the audience, however little attention she vouchsafed the singers, watched his approach, and, whilst he made his way round to her box, swept with her lorgnette over the agitated countenance of the artist-wife, at the same time that her tongue swept over her character. “Alphonse!” lisped she, in Alphonse's native language, and with a most honeyed and languid manner, “you are correct, the wife of our

delightful friend is a great fright, with her untasteful *coiffure*, her red hair, and that bold staring white face of hers. Ah ! it is a happy thing for our dear friend that he is so blindly besotted that he perceives neither her hideousness nor her carelessness of him, nor her disgusting flirtation with that man seated beside her. Bah ! those English-women and those *emancipated* women are very dreadful—,” but suddenly changing her tone,—“ Ah, dear Baron, delighted to see you ! your lovely Baroness I perceive is here to-night ; we were just talking about her, Monsieur d'Etoile and I,—he vows I must be painted by her,—will she descend, dear Baron, think you, to immortalize me ?”

The “ dear Baron ” was delighted : “ Fidelio,” the near-sighted lady, Monsieur d'Etoile himself, everything was delightful, enchanting to him ; he was again in his most charming of spirits. Oh, it was an enchanting evening.

Herr Xavier also thought the evening enchanting, and pondered much upon it as he walked to his hotel through the brilliant moonlight.

CHAPTER IV.

A TEA-PARTY AT THE COURT-COUNSELLOR'S.—THE ENGLISH TRAVELLERS DISCOVER AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

WHILST the baronial pair were enjoying themselves at the Opera, as we have seen, certain of their friends and admirers were assembled in a pleasant sunny garden just without the city, where the vast plain of Munich stretches away and away for miles and miles in an unbroken and desolate level, almost from the very thresholds of the suburban houses and gardens which encircle that side of Munich as with a garland of freshness and fragrance. Above the clustering acacias, lilac, and laburnums of the garden, were seen the pure white marble columns and pediment of the beautiful Glyptothek, the gallery of sculpture, the evening sunlight gleaming upon its loveliness, and tinting the one side with roseate reflections, whilst the other remained in azure shadow, and beyond all, along the vast mournful horizon, lay a solemn assembly of gorgeous evening clouds, golden, rose, violet, dun, with heavenly glory streaming through them in mighty rays of fiery light. But to gain a good view of the sunset you had to ascend into a quaint pepper-box summer-house, which, overshadowed by a rank vine, was constructed close to the road which skirted the garden, and where, from the trellised balcony, you commanded a view of the plain, and also, which was considerably more to the taste of many frequenters of the pepper-box, a view of all the passers-by up and down the road.

This bowery garden, and especially this summer-house, were all astir with lively tongues, and active knitting-needles, and tea and coffee-drinking, this particular evening in question. Ludmilla's mother was having a "ladies' party," but as there chanced to have called with a letter of introduction, upon the learned Hofrath that afternoon, our acquaintance the young Englishman whom we saw in the *Kunst-Verein*, he and his young wife and her sister were all

three invited to join the party, and the Hofrath was perforce obliged to honour the society himself, to prevent poor Mr. Fleming being that unlucky monster, the one gentleman in "a ladies' party."

It was vastly amusing to Mr. Fleming, however, and would perhaps have been still more so to him, had his benevolent host left him to his own untoward fate among the women-kind, instead of talking to him in his funny English about "Schlegel, Carlyle, and the present dreadful state of criticism in Great Britain," about which happy Mr. Fleming cared and understood not a button. He had never before been among so many comfortable German maids and matrons, and though he only spoke their language in a manner scarcely as intelligible to them, no doubt, as the critic's English was to him, yet many of them could speak capital English, and even those who could not, spoke French, or nodded and repeated their German sentences in such an amiable, merry manner, that never certainly could there have been a pleasanter mode of studying their language invented! Besides, what wicked enjoyment had not Mr. Fleming, in watching, on her entrance among the company, his young wife's bashful English embarrassment, which showed itself in a monosyllabic quietness, pronounced of course behind her back, as "that detestable English pride," and in her sister's scarcely concealed surprise at the "oddness" of everything, betraying itself to him, though of course to none of the party but himself, by an increased largeness of her large blue eyes. The unlucky young English ladies had come in their white muslin dresses with short sleeves, and with flowers in their hair, expecting it was a regular evening party: very unlucky this was, but it was only pronounced "English" by the good German women, who founded, much to their satisfaction, upon it, a theory regarding the prevalence of consumption in England, owing to the unseemly custom of young ladies in that constant fog of England going about in "*cut-out dresses*." Ludmilla, among her numerous accomplishments, spoke English remarkably well, and this helped on the conversation most agreeably with Mrs. Fleming and her sister, Miss Lavinia Massey, and after the tea, diluted extremely by water from the silver kettle which simmered over its little spirit-lamp, on the middle of the table, had been

quaffed by the company out of cups of the gayest description, each one differing from the other in form, gilding, and colour, and the baskets of quaintly shaped cakes, and curled and plaited, and sugared and cinnamoned, and iced and perfumed biscuits, had been considerably emptied by the nimble fingers of the fair ladies, and their no less nimble lips, and when the white cloth being withdrawn from the tea-table in the pepper-box summer-house, the older ladies resumed their quivering knitting-needles, together with their equally active flow of gossip, Ludmilla, pitying the bewildered ears of the English ladies, conducted them down the rustic steps of the summer-house, into the wilderness garden beneath, where already, among the shrubs, and between the edges of the shaggy patches of lawn, might the wiry little critical Hofrat, and his wickedly smiling guest, be seen parading up and down.

The young ladies having touched upon the various "lions" of Munich, fell into discourse about the *Kunst-Verein*; and Mrs. Fleming having a certain undeveloped germ of art in her, and a fully developed germ of curiosity, began numerous questions regarding the Baroness von Ehrenberg, who was an Englishwoman, and *so clever!*—"Did Mrs. —— then really know her? And did she like her? And was she not very queer? Oh, do tell us about her, Mrs. ——!" cried both the young ladies. "And about her husband, whom a gentleman at the *table d'hôte* to-day says is *such* a fascinating man, and a great favourite at Court too, and *so handsome!*" Ludmilla smiled rather a dry smile. "Oh, yes, he is reckoned very fascinating, but the Baroness is my particular friend; and perhaps as I know most about her, I consider her more agreeable than her husband: she has made me quite in love with all your nation, and it is quite delightful to see how much she likes our country; but I suppose, now that she has married a German, we must consider her as half one of ourselves. I know the Baroness von Ehrenberg extremely well," pursued Ludmilla, smiling, and who, spite of a natural inherent caution, could not avoid launching out into praises of her beloved and admired friend. "I know her extremely well, owing to various circumstances, but especially to her having resided in our family upon her first arrival in Munich. She had lost her mother whilst in Dresden, and poor Margaret!—I can never, in thinking of

my friend, dear young ladies, call her anything else but by her Christian name—was very lonely, spite of her devotion to study, and imagined, in coming to a new city, it would cheer her to live among kind, intelligent people; so having letters to my father from a valued friend of his in Dresden, she asked us to recommend her to some kind pleasant people with whom she might board, and we, feeling all of us a peculiar interest in her from the first moment we met, proposed that she should have rooms with us, to which she most readily agreed, and with us she remained until her marriage; in fact, it was through my father that the Baron made her acquaintance. I've sometimes wondered," remarked Ludmilla, after a slight hesitation, "what induced her to marry; she, so independent and self-reliant, and eccentric in her habits. But there seemed a vast blank in her life after the death of her mother, and perhaps the Baron's honied words were unusually insinuating at a time when often I have seen tears start to her eyes, as happy family groups have passed us in our rambles through the English garden, on those balmy evenings of her early sojourn with us; and she has said, after all, dear friend! my art-aspirations are at times very like a little lark, who sinks down exhausted from his singing among the sunlight, dazzled and faint, and longing for an earthly resting-place, at least for a space, among sweet common grass and flowers. I believe her poor heart was very desolate and sad at times, and therefore that the Baron von Ehrenberg, who can talk well about love and life, and the poetry of existence, and such things, in a remarkably graceful manner, and who delighted her by his admiration of her artistic talent in the first instance, made an impression upon her heart far deeper than any of us expected."

"But has she then no relatives, no connections at all? How *very* queer! No uncles nor aunts, nor anything at all comfortable?" inquired the young English ladies, whose curiosity was fully aroused. "Why, really, *Arabella!*" suddenly ejaculated Miss Lavinia, with a crimson flush spreading all over her excited countenance, "this lady never can be old Mrs. Lushington's god-daughter, or great-niece, or whatever it is, whom they were always talking about, and who, you remember, years and years ago, when we were

little children, offended Mamma, and old Mrs. Lushington also, so much, because she would not admire Caroline's white-velvet cover for Mamma's chair, which she had painted? you remember it? all over roses and tulips; nor even the screens for the drawing-room chimney-piece, with the monster pink and green butterflies! Oh, I wonder whether it can be she? Oh, what was her name, Mrs. —? was she Miss Harwood?"

"Yes, she was Miss Harwood," replied Ludmilla, scarcely less surprised than the young ladies,—"And I have heard her occasionally refer to an old lady called Mrs. Lushington."

"Robert! Robert!" cried both the young girls, seizing Mr. Fleming by both his arms in a most unceremonious manner, as he passed in entangled converse with the old Hofrath, who, pausing also with the young Englishman, made both ladies a most courtly reverence, which they, however, were too much absorbed to notice.—"Oh, Robert! only think how odd, how deliciously odd! that Baroness whose picture you admired so much is—oh! do, *do*, guess, Robert—but you never will; you are so stupid at guessing!—is Margaret Harwood,—old Mrs. Lushington of Flimbsted's god-daughter, about whom you know we have heard such queer things since she has been grown up. Mamma, you remember Lavinia always said she never could believe she was in her right senses; but we always liked her when we were children because she put out old nurse Rodham's cap when it was on fire that night she slept at our house, and when we went screaming about the nursery in terror she leapt out of her bed, don't you remember, and flung the water out of the jug on the wash-hand-stand over poor old Rodham as she was rushing out of the door?—Oh, I am so glad! I am so glad!" sang both sisters, clapping their hands and dancing round Mr. Fleming and the astounded old critic, who could only smile most devotedly; some way imagining that this extempore ballet was designed to honour him, and strangely perplexed both by it and by his cloudy knowledge of the English language,—which knowledge seemed utterly to escape him as he attempted to distinguish the meaning of the English words rapidly enunciated by the excited girls.

"Oh, Ludmilla!" at length pitifully asked the old gentle-

man in his native tongue ; " What are the dear young English ladies saying to please me ? " — Ludmilla rapidly explained the cause of their excitement, which, however wounding it might be to his vanity, was, however, so interesting to his heart,—for he had an almost paternal regard for our Baroness, and always prided himself upon having introduced her husband to her,—that he listened all ears to the English ejaculations of surprise and delight of the merry group, and which, having now his cue, he could follow somewhat.

" Oh, delightful indeed, girls ! delightful ! 'pon my soul it *is* famous—really first rate ! I'll have pictures of both of you girls, that I will, if your old friend will only paint them ; yes, if we stay a month longer in Munich on purpose. It will be prime work showing them to those old *muff's* at Flimbsted as the pictures of a celebrated continental artist, and hearing all their praises, and then, after all, telling them *who* the painter is, and hearing what they will say *then* ! Old Mrs. Dorothy, I know, will begin to cry very hard ; but as for old Madam Lushington, I can't even picture to myself what *she* will say ! But Caroline, girls ! your sister Caroline,—do you think *she* will admire your pictures ; or will she repeat the words of my lady Baroness's criticism on her screens years ago, and say,—' *No, ma'am, but indeed I can't admire gaudy dawbs?*' Poor old girl ! it will be a great trial of her magnanimity, won't it ? "

" But how are we to make the Baroness's acquaintance ? " suddenly demanded Mr. Fleming, after a hearty fit of laughter, in which Arabella and Lavinia's gay voices joined.

That difficulty was soon arranged. Ludmilla and the Hofrath were to accompany them to the Baroness von Ehrenberg's studio in the forenoon of the following day. They did so, astonishing Margaret no little, as she sat painting still upon the drapery of Ludmilla's portrait, and again pondering upon the letter received the day before from her old friend Mrs. Dorothy, by a living vision of those long-past days in the blooming bride and bridesmaid, who dawned upon her astonished memory as the laughing little sisters of Miss Caroline Massey, the renowned Poonah artist whose exquisite works had been eternally by her godmother held up to her for imitation and admiration in those days of yore.

Hearty, indeed, was the meeting between the old acquaintance, and it was speedily arranged how Margaret should paint the sisters—as a memory of their singular discovery of her own identity—in the self-same “*cut-out*” dresses worn the night of the Hofrath’s party—dresses which were very much to the taste of Mr. Fleming, who pronounced them decidedly “*spicy*.” In painting the portrait of Lavinia, there was a deal of laughter about a certain palm-tree which Mr. Fleming insisted upon having introduced. “Lavinia knows why well enough, the sly puss!—Eh, Lavinia? don’t you, don’t you now, like palms, and tigers, and the tropics, and any thing that is connected with India? Oh, yes, Mrs. Ehrenberg, be sure and put Livy’s palm in;”—and so, however mystified the poor Baroness might be by the request, the palm tree was introduced, as our readers will perceive if they turn to Lavinia’s portrait, which heads this chapter.

During the progress of these portraits, of course the fascinating Baron was introduced to Margaret’s new yet old acquaintance, and the impression made by him upon them was even greater than the impression she had created in her new character of artist and Baroness. The Baron and Mr. Fleming, indeed, formed quite a league of friendship: they were seen parading arm in arm down the Ludwig Strasse,—they were seen together at Tambosi’s,—and at many another less aristocratic haunt. Fleming was charmed to have an acquaintance who could show him life abroad. He and the Baron even made an excursion of ten days together among the mountains, where many a little adventure occurred which furnished anecdotes of German and English eccentricities to each gentleman in his separate circle for many a month to come. Fleming, especially, amused the Baron by the difficulty, nay, rather the impossibility, he found in sleeping in the beds at the inns where they staid. He did not appear at furthest above an inch taller than the fascinating Baron; still he never could manage to follow his example, and repose in “those deuced uncomfortable German cribs,” as he denominated the beds, “where your legs are doubled up into nothing, or rather into something,—indeed, into your German bandy-legs, which you impudently, I find, call the “*English deformity*. Well, Baron!—by



Lavinia Madsen



Jove, how you've escaped it is an everlasting wonderment to me!" In fact, were one implicitly to believe the Baron von Ehrenberg's description, poor Fleming's Tyrolean trip was rendered quite bitter to him by his uneasy nights, which were passed in impotent endeavours to stretch himself out across his bed, with his feet resting on a couple of chairs, and his head on another chair,—diagonally upon his bed,—upon chairs, without the bed,—upon a mattrass pulled off the bed,—upon the sofa,—upon the very boards of the floor,—every where, in fact, except comfortably straight in his bed, as a less lanky and fastidious Englishman would have done. However, spite of the disturbed nights, both Fleming and the Baron retained a most agreeable and lively remembrance of their little tour, which seemed really to put the seal upon their friendship. And when the time arrived for the Flemings' departure, most hearty were the hand-shakings of the two gentlemen. The Baron had tact enough to avoid giving an embrace to his English friend as he would have done to him had he been a German; and repeated were the requests that the Baron and Baroness would visit them speedily in good old England.

The acquaintance of the ladies had also progressed during the absence of the husbands, but not in the same degree. Margaret found the young ladies, though extremely amiable, rather vapid; and, except for the subjects of discourse afforded by their mutual knowledge of Flimbsted, and the old haunts, and old people, and old memories connected with it, their conversation would have been meagre enough, for Margaret was one of those women who grow even disagreeable when subjected to the constant irritation of "small-talk," and would experience a weariness unutterable after an hour's infliction of amiable giggle and vapid sweetness: still she learned many little things connected with her godmother, and the position of affairs at the old house, which were interesting to her, and intrusted letters and a drawing in water-colours—a lovely sunrise in Greece—one of her favourite compositions, as a present to her godmother,—to the charge of Mrs. Fleming, whose new home was even nearer to Flimbsted Manor than the home of the Masseys, Grimby Court. The young ladies on their side were more awe-struck than fascinated by their old acquaintance; and

the memories of certain anatomical plates and drawings from “the nude” model which they had found in one of her portfolios, and certain involuntary fits of abstraction into which the Baroness had fallen during the time she was painting them, and they rattling away in childish glee, would no doubt figure in their descriptions of her as shadows to the picture drawn by them and Mr. Fleming of the baronial pair.

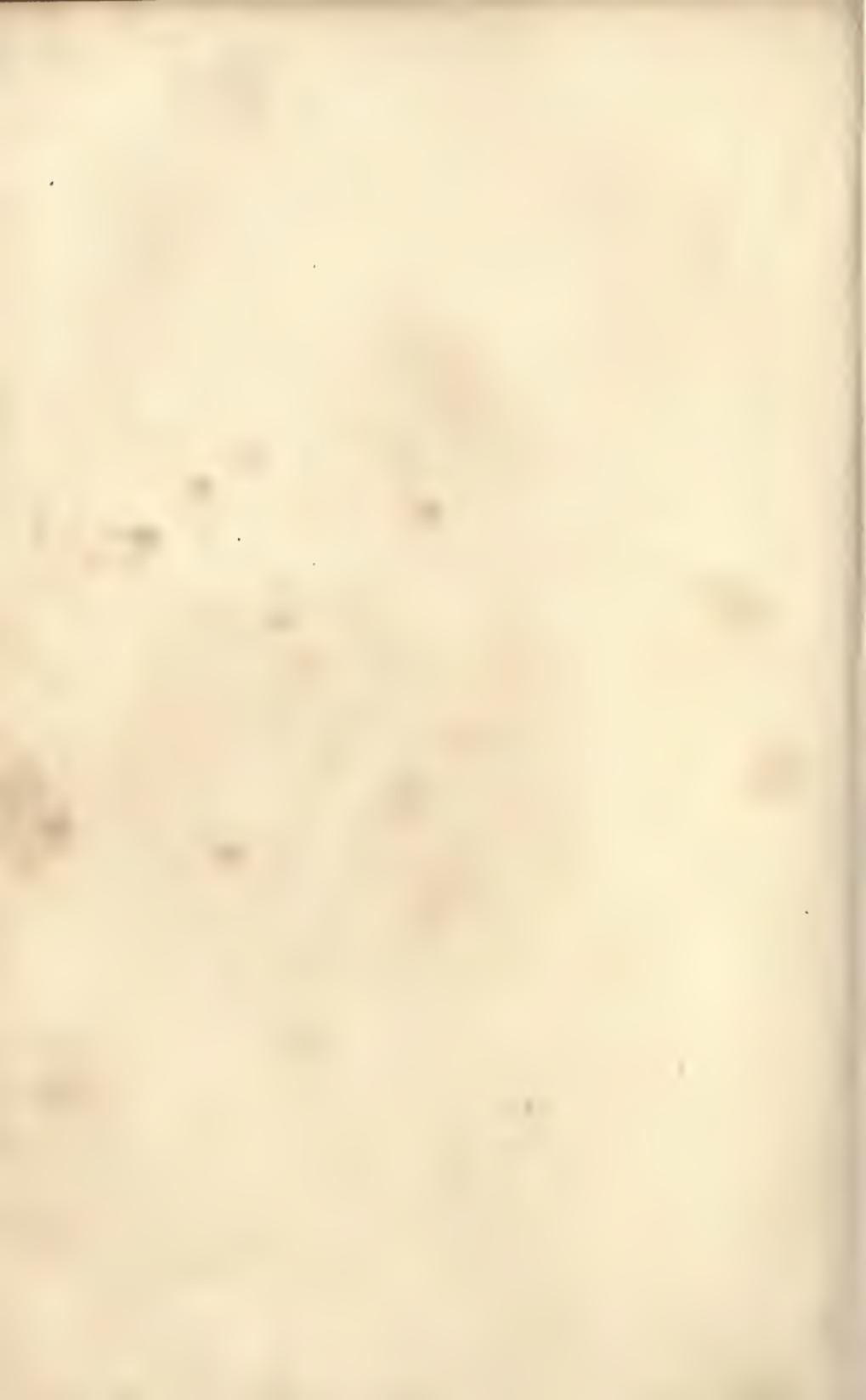
And now, with the reader’s permission, we will hasten over a space of several months, merely observing that there seemed to be a regular rush to the Baroness von Ehrenberg’s studio for portraits, and that her whole time was absorbed in painting them,—one among these portraits being a very sentimental lady in a fancy costume; and our shrewd suspicions are, that this picture found its way into the dressing room of the devoted French *Attaché*. Two most antiquated and extraordinary oil-paintings, also of a large size, and of wondrous colouring, arrived in the course of the autumn from Augsburg, directed to the Baroness; but as she was very much occupied, and had heard nothing at all about them, she put them hastily away behind her green curtain as terrible eye-sores which must be concealed, and also must be inquired about some day,—but being out of sight, they soon passed entirely out of mind.

The Baroness was really extremely occupied; and, although portrait painting was by no means her favourite walk of art, still she most wisely determined “to make hay whilst the sun shone,” and lay up quietly a nice little private fund, to be expended by her upon the prosecution of her studies in Italy,—her cherished day-dream of many a long year—a dream which she flattered herself this unexpected run of money-luck might convert into a sober reality.

The Baron was extremely gratified to see his prophecy of her success in portraiture fulfil itself, more especially as, in a pecuniary point of view, it was most useful to them both, and greatly plumed himself upon it, smiling and growing doubly amiable. Yet still the Baroness imagined to herself that at times there was a shadow of discontent upon his fascinating brow—perhaps it was her over-anxious heart, she would say to herself; or it might be—yes, secretly, at the bottom of her heart, she desired earnestly it *might* be so,



The Court Lady.



—an uneasiness about the long delay of his appointment. It really had a demoralising effect upon a character, such an aimless, dutiless existence; and besides, she felt money matters *might* grow serious and anxious affairs to them; —and, although it was a pleasant thing to pay off a milliner's bill and a few odd trifles with the delightful *rouleau* of florins received for a sketch or a portrait, or to purchase the fascinating Baron a fascinating new coat, or a fascinating pair of boots, on an emergency, also out of her private fund, still it decidedly went against the grain with the Baroness. But if such a hint were breathed by her earnest lips, or an anxiety looked out of her grave eyes at the amiable Baron, he would so overwhelm her with merry speeches, and look at her with such arch and loving eyes, and so for the moment annihilate her reason by his gaiety, that the anxious suspicion would fade out of her heart for a space, only, however, again and again to return.

And so the year rolled on with the baronial pair and with all the world, and has brought us to the very midst of the gay Carnival.

CHAPTER V.

A TETE-A-TETE BREAKFAST, AND AN UNMASKING BEFORE THE MASKED BALL.

It had been an unusually gay and brilliant carnival this year at Munich; the court, the military, the students, the *bourgeoisie*, all had given their masked balls with a madder enjoyment than usual. The weather had been splendidly bright and sunny, spite of the hard frost which still kept the earth enchain'd; and thus, at times, masks even were seen parading the streets as in Italy, or an open carriage filled with masqueraders would in broad daylight roll through the streets. Every one declared such a mad, merry carnival had not been known for years; but the maddest, merriest event of all had yet to occur, and this was the artists' masked ball.

The Baron had had his full enjoyment of all the winter gaiéties, but Margaret, who cared little for such things, had invariably declined all invitations to balls, whether public or private, leaving to her charming husband the task, to him an easy one, of doing the polite for them both. But this artists' ball was altogether another affair, and Margaret really felt herself growing enthusiastic about it, as her husband, who was in the very thick of the excitement, and as her artist acquaintance daily communicated to her the wonderful preparations that were in progress. The painters of all grades were banded together to produce something unusually gorgeous, it was said; and the droll and humorous programmes and proclamations issued by their committee excited expectation throughout the city to the very last degree of enthusiasm. The King, it was said, had entered heart and soul into the scheme, and many revered artist-names were passed from mouth to mouth as the creators of unrivalled beauty gradually developing itself within the walls of the Opera-house, where the festival was to take place.



The Carnival at Munich.



Margaret had decided to wear the costume of Titian's daughter in the Pinakothek Gallery,—a crimson velvet dress with a simple deep white lawn tucker drawn across the bosom, and her magnificent golden hair put back from her temples and confined behind in a rich golden net; she must also carry in her hand a feather fan. This costume pleased her on various accounts,—because it was most unobtrusive, comparatively inexpensive, and, according to the assurance of her husband, most becoming. In fact, the Baron was singularly solicitous about her appearance that night, and, much to her surprise, insisted upon her permitting him to have a suite of pearls reset for her. As they were her sole reliques from her beloved mother's dwindled store of jewels, he knew how greatly she valued them; and now, to honour them and this grand art-festival, they must indeed, declared her loving husband, be reset in the most unique and lovely manner—in a style suitable, indeed, to her Titian costume. He had already arranged with a jeweller about them, and, to do him an especial favour, his beloved Margaret must gratify his whim: yes, certainly he would grant it *was* a whim; still, to a loving heart a whim will be law stringent as that of Mede or Persian. He overruled every objection of Margaret with the merriest humour, and, laughing, carried off his prize to his jeweller. Margaret's old uneasinesses regarding expenses and extravagance even returned with tenfold violence as soon as her husband's presence had vanished out of the house; but again he silenced her lips, if not her reason, by such pleasant words, and by such amiable unselfishness in the proposal for his own costume at the ball, whilst he was thus lavishing expense upon her, that she even appeared to start up before herself a monster of sheer ingratitude.

These arrangements had taken place some ten days before the morning of the artists' ball: upon which we return to our friends, finding them enjoying a tête-à-tête breakfast; the rooms rendered rather chaotic by various articles of costume lying upon chairs and sofas. The married pair were in merry discourse regarding the approaching festival, the artistic beauty of which carried the enthusiastic Margaret along with it now, spite of economy or busy cares.

"Dearest, dearest husband!" she cried, with almost

childish glee, “how silly I’ve been, with all my fears of heaven only knows what. Now we will cast care aside, and be merry as merriest carnival!—and therefore, to commence with merriment, I’ve a merry revelation to make, dear Conrad!”—and starting up from the sofa at his side, she was hurrying to a cabinet to reveal a beautiful and quaint helmet she had constructed for her husband, who was to personate a knight in the Niebelungen procession, which was to form a principal feature of the evening’s wonders; but the Baron flung his arms around her as she rose, and drawing her towards him with a most lover-like ardour, and imprinting a kiss upon her beautiful hand, cried—

“I also, Queen Margaret, have *my* merry revelation to make. Have my brilliant eyes so dazzled you, O queen! that my ring has escaped all notice? See, see! how it sparkles! how it shines! how it burns!” cried the Baron, extending his hand aloft, and exhibiting a magnificent diamond ring upon his finger, where usually he had worn a ring of much less attractive character.

“Conrad! *how* beautiful! But *how?* *when?* *where?*—?”

“Yes, *how?* *when?* *where?* Don’t you confess, O peerless daughter of Eve! to a grain of mother Eve’s curiosity? *How?* *when?* *where?* Let your glowing imagination stretch forth her wings, and, encompassing sea and land, ‘riddle me the why and the what,’ as your poet hath it. But, at all events, is it not a beautiful ring? handsomer a hundred-fold than its predecessor, and a real valuable possession;—but how it alighted, my beautiful ring, upon my little finger, guess that:—*how, where, and when?*—Oh, but I am not going to relate my romantic history, Margaret, if, instead of smiles into your face, I see the ring has called forth such an ugly scowl.”

“Dear, dear Conrad! not a scowl of anger, or ill-temper, far from it! but, believe me, it does, I hardly myself know why, call forth from my heart a bitter anxiety, and pain, and uneasiness, this ring, beautiful as it is—oh, pardon me, dearest husband! when perhaps I am most unjust—it excites a fear lest you—lest we have been too lavish, too thoughtless, too—”

“Lavish! too lavish!” interrupted the Baron, starting up from the sofa, and dashing away the table with an im-

petuosity and with a heightened colour and voice which fairly parched the lips of the Baroness with an astonished terror,—so entirely unlike her caressing and amiable husband did he appear to her at that moment.

"Oh, Conrad, what have I said thus to excite such unnatural anger—such words and looks frightful in you, who ever—"

"Who ever have been fool enough to let your tongue, Margaret," cried he, his whole frame quivering with nervous excitement, "speak what silly trash it would, unheeded, though, believe me, Margaret, not unfelt; you have goaded me long enough with your 'fears' and your 'anxieties,' and it *does* sting me to the very quick to see such a scowl upon your face at a moment when I was intending a surprise—an *agreeable* surprise, of course, to you," added he, hurriedly and with a sneer, to Margaret, yes, with a sneer, most strange, most miserable."

"But, Conrad," pleaded she—a smile, however, stealing over her face, for the whole affair at that instant assumed an almost comic aspect to her mind, as she saw her husband chafing with his anger, so groundless and sudden—"but, Conrad, never mind my words, let me hear the wonderful history!" and she laid her hand soothingly upon his arm; but, as though the hand stung him, he flung it from him, and grinding his teeth with very rage, in the bitterest terms vowed never more should she goad him and taunt him as she so long had done!—was he a child, forsooth, that he required her advice, her anxious lecturing upon every mere trifle: might he not even then procure a ring, but my fine lady must moan and lament!" and, upsetting the box in which lay his wonderful helmet, and kicking it with intense disgust as he strode towards the door, he disappeared, banging the sitting-room door and the outer door, also, after him with a tremendous noise, and was gone!

And Margaret! pale as a statue, she stood for an instant in the centre of the room—her lips bloodless, and her eyes flashing with a dark indignation. "The man must be mad, or—worse," she quietly and slowly said aloud, in English, to herself. "This has been our first misunderstanding,—unless I mistake much, *this shall be our last*. Truly, one thing I have to regret, and that is that the goad was *not*

oftener used—for, alas, I feel within me a presentiment pointing to an uneasy and dissatisfied conscience as the secret of this unworthy anger—not my words!” And Margaret, with a mechanical hand, picked up the luckless helmet and placed it carefully in its box, and then, with an equally cold manner, she arranged the disordered breakfast-table. Not a tear fell from her eye—not a word more escaped her lips, upon which sat a strange and cold determination: a horrible stony feeling had grown round her heart—yet all anxiety seemed for the time benumbed, except the petty miserable disgust that Barbette should have heard the Baron’s angry words and the loudly-slammed doors. To Margaret’s imagination a matrimonial quarrel had always been so peculiarly offensive;—her pride, her womanly delicacy were wounded to the very quick—and this sick disgust was the only wound which bled outwardly; but, on *her* side, no one should observe any change. Barbette, when she cleared away the breakfast things, saw the Baroness, whom she glanced at with a queer expression on entering, busily and calmly engaged in “setting” her palette. Yes, Margaret would paint, though her hand trembled like an aspen-leaf, as she found, and though the picture seemed to fade away into a vast distance when she seated herself before the easel—she would paint—yes, her painting was after all—who knew? said a secret something within her—henceforth to be all, everything to her. But how absurd are such voices in moments of over-wrought feeling! What was this,—a quarrel—oh, it was scarcely a quarrel even; and why should they be so unlike all the rest of the world?—oh, it was nothing! nothing! But the wounded pride bled and bled; all else, however, seemed stone and ice,—and losing all consciousness of time, and everything except the sick weight at her heart, she painted on and on.

There were many preparations yet to be made for the evening: for unluckily this happened to be, as we have said, the very day of the Artist’s festival; but all thoughts of it vanished out of poor Margaret’s mind, as she sat painting on and on, with her stolid mien.

Ludmilla, with whom and her father the Von Ehrenbergs had arranged to go to the Ball, was the first disturber of Margaret’s miserable reverie. Ludmilla arrived, radiant

as the bright joyous winter's morning without, where a brilliant sun shone out of a deep-blue cloudless heaven upon the crisp white snow beneath the foot, while the keen clear air braced mind and body. The artist's shaded room and the artist's sorrow-stricken face smote upon Ludmilla's spirit with a double mournfulness.

"Margaret," cried she, looking around her in a surprise, as if expecting to see some tangible misery,—“Good heaven! what ails you?—or is it only that both your room, with its half-closed window, and yourself, seen sitting against that green curtain, strike me, suddenly coming out of the external brightness and sunshine, as death-like and gloomy. Why what on earth are you doing with your painting, on such a morning as this? Depend upon it you'll be the sole painter who will work to-day;—and how have all your arrangements turned out for your costumes? I'm in a regular gossiping mood, and want to see all your things, and hear all the last news! And your clever helmet, with its beautiful heron's wings and its ivy-wreath—does it look as charming as you anticipated?—and does the dear Baron look as charming in it as you declared he would. Oh, you must show it me, and tell me whether the Baron was not very much surprised?—and then are your pearls yet come home? and your dress? But dearest, dearest Margaret, something *does* ail you, I am certain—your hand trembles so strangely, and you are so white: good God, you are ill!” and starting up, Ludmilla sprang to her friend's side; but Margaret, calmly turning towards her her bloodless countenance, and her whole frame quivering with a very ague-fit, said, in a deep hoarse voice,—

“Ludmilla, dear, I must somehow have overworked myself, for I feel a severe pain in my forehead, but it will soon go—only take no notice of me, or do not appear to consider me ill; it is one of my weaknesses, that I cannot endure to be pitied for any little physical ailment: really, dear friend, this is only nervousness, and will soon pass; and do not let me spoil any one's enjoyment, or my own,”—this was said, indeed, with a bitter smile,—“on such a bright day as this!”

But Ludmilla secretly was far from being relieved of a bitter and increasing anxiety by these words, and still she

scrutinized her beloved friend with keen and searching eyes ; but Margaret had again turned to her painting, and the ague-fit had past. Margaret even so far recovered her self-command as to shew the costumes to her friend, which were lying in chaotic disorder, as you may remember, in the breakfast-room,—and, although Ludmilla left, beseeching Margaret to repose herself for the evening, Margaret declared that she already was much better, and that they would find her, depend upon it, the gayest of the gay, when they called for her and the Baron that night.

When Ludmilla was gone, and the full sense of the bitterness which lay within her heart rushed back upon her soul, tears,—a very torrent,—seemed to swell within her breast ; but with an almost superhuman effort she crushed them down within her, and with tearless eyes and bloodless lips she laid out upon the Baron's bed all his costume,—his rich maroon velvet cloak, his green doublet, his gorgeously jewelled dagger, and his unlucky quaint helmet, so beautiful and unique, and which seemed with its fresh greenery a bit out of the old sylvan world of the Niebelungen. She did all mechanically ; it was what she had intended always to do in the day, to put all his things ready for him ; among them various little articles which, according to her artistic sense, rendered the costume more complete, and which were to surprise him : among these was the dagger, which she had borrowed from an artist friend for him, and a quaint hunting-horn. She now never said even to her heart,—Will he be pleased with these things ? But she arranged them as she had fancied herself doing them all along, and that also before she arranged her own. She even stood a long time admiring the beautiful colour and artistic effect of the things before her : they seemed more beautiful to her eye than ever ; she found herself steeping her spirit in this beauty ;—but it was only one portion of herself that did all this, that moved about and painted and laid hundreds and hundreds of plans for the future, and could gaze for ten minutes at a time upon a bit of golden brocade and velvet upon moss and ivy leaves ; the other portion was severed from the active, breathing, artistic Margaret,—it was like one bewildered with a mighty horror,—it sat apart, shut up, forgotten of the other.

Hour after hour passed over, and no Baron returned.

Except for the miserable scene of the morning and his unaccountable state of irritation, Margaret would have found no especial cause of uneasiness or wonderment in this, as they were always extremely independent of each other, as we have already observed.—“He will come back in time to dress for the ball,” said one mental voice. “All will be as though nothing unpleasant had happened; and, Margaret, *you* were perhaps wanting at least in tact.”—“No, never, never, never again will things be as they were! never, never, never again will your love be the same: there was much more in his action than the mere deeds and words!” murmured another voice;—and as it murmured and whispered, the miserable portion of Margaret sitting apart in its solitude arose and wrung its hands, and beat its head against the walls of its prison.

Hour after hour passed; she found herself listening and listening! Oh, it would be so much better if he would come and let them talk it all over; she would be *so* wary in her words; she would say all with such love in her face, that *if*—Ah! miserable, imprisoned voice, be silent!—*if* he loved her he must listen to her words. Yes, she was sure now that he was torn and badgered with many cares, and her words might truly have been the last drop in the miserable bitter cup; and though she felt wounded, or at any other time *would* have felt wounded, that he had not confided all his anxieties to her, as she should have done by him, still a man’s nature was doubtless prouder, harder, than a woman’s. Oh, only let *her* be charitable,—let her, at least, not through blind, stupid, wounded pride, act wrongly, cruelly, hardly:—for, oh! cried that moaning, miserable, restless voice aloud, calling through that solitary cell in her heart, “You *do love him*, Margaret; and love, though trodden under foot, though stabbed and spat upon, yet puts forth its flowers, its delicate tendrils, and will fill with light and fragrance a very dungeon!” And, for the first time for months, hot tears showered from Margaret’s eyes; and, sinking on her knees, she besought God to remove all bitterness, all miserable wicked bitterness, out of her heart and his, and to strengthen her, whatever might occur, to act as He would bid her act.

But no Baron came! Evening was closing in; already she heard carriages begin to drive about: it was necessary,

she remembered, for them to go early in order to secure seats for the evening; and that the good critic and his daughter would call for them at a certain early hour she remembered also. Oh, if the Baron would but return! But he did not. She mechanically dressed herself, with Barbette's assistance, in her beautiful costume,—Barbette all the time chattering away about all that *she* had heard regarding the ball, and admiring her gracious lady's appearance, and at the same time noticing every thing peculiar about poor Margaret's manner and countenance in order to gossip about it with the Frau Majorin's cook, and with Carl, the Baron's man.—“And, oh! what a pity it was that the gracious gentleman should stay out so late; he never would be back in time to dress himself properly in all his beautiful things! And would her gracious lady wait for her gracious gentleman, or go with the honourable Mr. Hofrath when he came? Oh, *Herr Je! Herr Je!* how the carriages did drive thundering through the streets! Oh! her gracious lady would be so late, and the gracious gentleman not come home!—but, there! there! he must be!—that must be his ring! and then her gracious lady need leave no message for him, but they would all go so finely together!”—And Barbette, with her everlasting clack, so wearisome always to Margaret's English ear, so especially sickening to-night, ran off to open the door.

Margaret heard Barbette usher some one into the saloon: it evidently was not the Baron. Barbette, entering the chamber, closed the door most carefully after her: then standing with her back against it, called out in a loud whisper,—“Lady Baroness, it is a gentleman, a person, who wants to see the gracious lady *ALONE!*”

“Well, Barbette, and what of that? Take the lamp into the saloon, and tell him I will come;” said Margaret, with a composed voice and countenance, but with a horrible sickness darting from her heart through every vein and nerve.

“I have done so, Lady Baroness!” again hoarsely whispered Barbette.

With an indescribable foreboding, Margaret, dressed in her lovely costume, entered the drawing-room. She instantly recognized, standing in the centre of the room, a well-known jeweller of the town, and in his hands her dear old casket

containing the pearls. She had quite forgotten the pearls, so entirely had the agitating day absorbed her every thought; and now, although the sight of the casket jarred upon a string of anxiety, still she felt a momentary sense of relief. "You have brought my pearls, Mr. ——, I perceive;" said the Baroness.

"Yes! the gracious lady would, he doubted not, extremely admire the style of the setting. The Baron von Ehrenberg had such perfect taste!—and, indeed, if he might be so bold as to offer a remark, the pearls were indeed worthy to be worn upon so important an occasion and with so tasteful a dress; and, really, he did not wonder that the Baron von Ehrenberg should have gone to so much expense about the ball, for he understood—the lady Baroness of course knew that every thing was speedily spread through their little city, which was not like London and Paris,—yes, he had understood that the Baron stood at that moment extremely high with his Majesty; but of course, of course he knew such things were not to be repeated to every one,—but, as the Baron had seemed to consider expense as no object, he had readily believed,—and as the gracious lady herself—"

"But allow me to see my pearls," said Margaret, growing impatient of the jeweller's wordiness, and stretching forth her hand towards the casket.

"Perhaps the gracious lady was aware—yes, of course she knew that before giving up the pearls, he must request her to sign her name to the paper which he brought with him—she was, he knew, acquainted with the transaction—merely a little business form, of course, which certainly it was ungallant to trouble a lady about—still business was business:—" and placing the casket upon the table, he took forth his pocket-book, and a portable ink-stand, and having selected a certain paper, laid it upon the table in the full light of the lamp.

A sick faintness had gradually crept over Margaret's frame, and, as she mechanically bent over the table to read the paper, all seemed to swim around her; but there, in the well-known handwriting of her husband, stood these words, which burnt themselves as with living fire into her brain.

"Munich, Feb. 15th, 184—.

"I promise, on behalf of my wife, Margaret Baroness von Ehrenberg, neé Harwood, that she shall pay to Caspar Theodore Wolf, Wein Strasse, within twelve calendar months from the above date, the sum of 1000 florins, for a diamond ring, and otherarticles, which I have purchased from the said Caspar Theodore Wolf; and I further engage that my wife, the Baroness von Ehrenberg, shall sign this paper upon its being presented to her.

"CONRAD ADELBERT VON EHRENBURG."

"N.B.—By consent of the Baron von Ehrenberg, the suite of pearls belonging to the Baroness von Ehrenberg, and which have been reset by me according to directions received from the Baron von Ehrenberg, shall be retained in my hand as a pledge for the completion of this engagement.

"Written in presence of the Baron von Ehrenberg,

"CASPAR THEODORE WOLF.

"Feb. 15th, 184—."

Again and again did the miserable Baroness read the paper: as she lent over the table it seemed to her as though her eyes must follow the hateful words up and down everlastingly, as though her lips must mutely form the sounds, but as though their sense, though already burnt into her brain, would not be recognised by her soul. She still bent over the table, and her glazed eye-balls wandered up and down the paper, and her lips moved, but no sounds issued from them. "The gracious lady will permit me to offer her this pen—does the Baroness prefer a hard or a soft nib? Will the gracious lady perhaps permit me to read the memorandum to her? I forgot the gracious lady may find our German handwriting difficult to decipher?" and the jeweller also lent forward towards the paper.

"I shall *not* sign it!" clearly and firmly enunciated Margaret, proudly drawing herself up, and, as if suddenly possessed by a spirit of the intensest defiance—and her eye shot a fierce lightning: "never, never, so God help me, will I bind myself by that miserable paper!"

"Then your magnificent pearls, lady Baroness ——" smilingly suggested Mr. Wolf.

"Remain with you, sir!—Begone!—You are more than recompensed. Begone with you, I say!" and she pointed commandingly towards the door.

Mr. Wolf, politely uttering numerous apologies "for having so unconsciously, unavoidably, displeased the Baroness, but business was business," bowed himself out with the casket and memorandum.

A hotter indignation had now seized upon Margaret. All her suspicions were more, oh, far more than confirmed; words and actions of the Baron's assumed now a character so new and astounding, that she seemed to have dealings with an entirely different being to her husband, whom she had always admired and respected so sincerely. No, *he* was quite gone, faded into a memory of the past, where he stood up happily surrounded by love: he, this beloved husband, was as one dead. But the Baron von Ehrenberg, who wrote that paper—who had schemed so cleverly to enrich himself through her pearls—who so coolly wrote her name upon so miserable a document, oh! he had always been evil and false—towards him she had never either felt or sworn love—it was a wretched libel to speak of such a thing: she trampled with scorn his actions beneath her indignant feet; up and down the room she paced with fevered hurried steps; her eyes burned, a crimson tinted her usually white cheek, and her whole bearing was of one possessed by a strange and fierce spirit of anger.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARTISTS' BALL, AND AN OLD FRIEND WELL MET.

WHILST she was thus, like a caged beast, pacing her prison with hurried and angry steps, a carriage rolled to the door; there was a startling ring, and in came the Hofrath, all smiles, and bows, and compliments, to conduct her to the carriage. "Was she better than she had been in the morning, when Ludmilla called? But he need not ask that; she had the most charming hue of health on her blooming countenance!—how becoming was her costume—so truly artistic! But did her worthy husband know that the carriage was below?"

"My worthy husband," laughed Margaret, in a high and shrill key, "I suppose is going to surprise us all by assuming a character unimagined by any of us—I find he is fond of such things: at all events he has not dressed himself in his Niebelungen dress. But don't let us wait for him; probably he is there already, before us;—let us be off, dear Hofrath!" And taking the little man's arm as he presented it from beneath his sky-blue domino, they passed down stairs to the carriage, where Ludmilla, attired as an Italian peasant, awaited them.

Margaret felt the excitement of all around her in strange accordance with the extraordinary mood in which she was in: the roar of carriages hastening with their flaring lamps all towards the one goal, the Opera-house;—the laughter and shoutings of the crowd in the streets, and assembled around the steps of the Theatre, observant of the arriving company;—the blaze of light from the huge bronze candelabra which graced the broad steps, and flung wild lights and shadows upon the ascending fantastic throng, Moors, Turks, *Rococo*-ladies and gentlemen, fools and pilgrims;—Oh, she was no longer herself, nor the world the ordinary world, nor did anything appear too monstrous to be real; nor anything which she had ever considered real appear too real to be after all aught more than a mere mask and harlequinade;

she was delighted to have her countenance covered with her silk mask ; her dress, as she glanced down, or caught a glimpse of herself in the long mirrors upon the walls and staircases of the theatre, as they passed along, seemed to be that of some other being than Margaret von Ehrenberg. She felt to herself as wandering through a delirious dream ; —and now they stood within the theatre itself, the pit converted into a vast ball-room, from the centre of which arose a fairy pavilion of golden gothic tracery, festooned with living wreaths of the most lovely exotic creepers, with golden dolphins spouting forth streams of ruddy wine into a golden fountain beneath the golden pavilion ; with the richly emblazoned banners of the different artist-corps, floating in gorgeous folds and streamers from above it, with the spaces between the boxes draped with the same corps colours, and with ivy and moss garlands, binding together artistic trophies of palettes and brushes, alternating with groups of musical instruments : and the whole vast space was one moving mass of brilliant colour, whilst the walls were peopled with quaint and gorgeous crowds gazing down upon the quaint and gorgeous crowds below, and over all, and through all, sounded gay laughter, and shrill cries, and a maddening hum of frantic merriment.

Margaret's cheeks glowed and burnt beneath her silken vizer ; her eyes flashed with a weird light ; her bosom heaved with a fierce violence beneath her rich costume ; her tongue was armed with keen arrows, ready to pierce to the heart of her husband should she recognise him under any of the fantastic disguises around her. It was no longer a moaning, loving, enduring spirit that abode in the secret recess of her soul, but rather a spirit of fiery indignation, which, with its living scorn, would wither up as by scorching flame the object of its contempt. Her eyes sought out, through the mad tumultuous sea of life around her, for this object, but in vain ; the spirit was Argus-eyed, watching ever and ever, yet she moved about with an almost regal air ; she laughed, she cut right and left around her with her keen sword-like words, and this with an apparent brilliant gaiety which astounded Ludmilla, who had ever considered her friend as rather of a reflective and silent nature than gay or sparkling. But now the royal cortège having arrived and

taken its place of honour within the royal box, and the whole multitude having received the Art-King with deafening acclaims, and a song of welcome sung by the artists, the full jollity of the night commenced. To the sound of shrill music, the curtain at the back of the stage, which still occupied its accustomed place in the theatre, was swiftly drawn up, and forth dashed—whirling their clubs, striking them upon the ground, yelling, laughing, flinging *bon-bons* amid the crowd—a mad troop of “fools,” the pointed hoods and hanging sleeves of their quaint, particolour, mediæval dresses—scarlet, yellow, white, and crimson—flying in the wind, and the sound of their little bells mingling wildly with the turmoil. On they swept, leaping from the stage down into the ball-room, and rushing like a stream of fire through the multitude, which, with shrieks of laughter, parted on either side, leaving a broad pathway around the hall, and thus clearing a space for the dancing which was now to commence,—but not until a wondrous procession had gravely wound its way along, following in the wake of the mad fools; and this was the procession of the Niebelungen heroes:—those mighty men and women of that old poem, “Siegfried,” the youthful, generous, confiding, and bold warrior leading by the hand his beloved majestic Chrimhilda; the fiery jealous Brunhilde and her husband, King Gunther; Hagen, the treacherous murderer of Siegfried; and a vast train of knights, minstrels, ladies, and servitors; the dwarf-guardians of the Niebelungen treasure; the armed Hun followers of fierce old King Etzel; Etzel himself (Attala), Chrimhilda’s second husband, and the avenger of the noble Siegfried’s treacherous death. All wound along, clad in the rich and quaint costumes of that heroic age; their burnished shields and spears sparkling in the brilliant light of a thousand tapers; their swords and daggers encrusted with jewels. The stalwart forms of noble youthful knights revealed through closely-fitting golden chain-armour; rich velvet and embroidered draperies falling around the stately forms of noble ladies, their crisp locks confined in golden nets, or flowing in rich waves adown their proud shoulders; a band of hunters, with their ivory horns and sharp hunting-knives slung around them, with their hose and doublets of green, russet, orange, and grey—the colours of summer and

autumnal woods,—with their mystic helmets adorned with wings or other trophies of the chase, but ever wreathed with ivy sprigs or shaded by twigs of pine, breathing of sylvan solitudes ; minstrels, old and young, some with long flowing snowy beards, others with round youthful cheeks, smooth and lovely as a fair maiden's, but all with keen visionary eyes, and with laurel-crowned brows, and bearing in their hands golden harps, or quaint ebony violins inlaid with pearl, from which ever and anon they called forth fitful and fantastic strains, that wildly mingled with the heroic march sounding from the concealed orchestra.

On swept the train, and as it passed—a glorious vision of chivalric poetry—Margaret's artist-soul breathed freer and purer ; the fire within her burnt, but it consumed not herself or her own wrongs : her imagination had borne her forth into the spirit of those mighty old heroic deeds, and the largeness of the griefs, of the passions, of the sufferings, and the revenge, of those beings whose wonderful semblances had flowed past her in a vast stream as in a magic glass, ennobled her through the annihilation of self for the time being. She had torn off her mask, and, with earnest eyes and a dream-like solemnity stealing over her face, leant against an ivy-wreathed column, and watched the departure of the procession, unconscious of the troop of grotesque and whimsical characters which now pell-mell was rapidly spreading itself over the unoccupied space of the ball-room, and commencing a deliriously mad waltz.

A gentle and gracious voice aroused her out of her meditations, and her eyes encountered, bending towards her, the noble countenance of one of Germany's greatest painters : his wondrously clear eyes beamed a genial kindness, and a sense of extraordinary peace stole over her as his words fell upon her ear :—

“ I am loth, Baroness,” said the kind and courteous voice, “ to disturb so delicious an artist's reverie, as I recognise yours to be,—nay, unless it were to disturb it by a happy reality, I would not do so—for we artists know, do we not, dear Baroness ? that such reveries come from our Lord God Himself ! But here is an old friend of yours—nay, even a relative, he tells me—waiting to claim your recognition : permit me to present Mr. Herbert Lushington.”

And, as Margaret raised her astonished eyes from the noble countenance of the great painter, and directed them towards his companion, she recognised in the placid, sweet, but grave face, with its large, deep blue, mild eyes, and the luxuriant chesnut hair which, parted down the centre of the head, fell in wavy masses upon the shoulders, the old beloved companion of her early youth—her cousin Herbert! How astonishing was this meeting! how unreal, dream-like! and yet still more bewildering as she traced the changes of time and thought upon those familiar features, which seemed, since last they met, to have been been chiselled and refined by deepest thought and suffering: but the whole countenance beamed peace and blessedness, and the quiet tones of the old voice thrilled every nerve, like some once-beloved but long forgotten strain of music.

The great painter, waving his hand in adieu, was lost amidst the fantastic multitude, and the two friends were left standing together in bewildered delight at this extraordinary meeting.

"I have long been anticipating this encounter, Margaret," said Mr. Lushington, with the heartiest delight expressed in his beautiful eyes; "though you have utterly lost sight of your old friend, he has not done so of you. My love of German philosophy and poetry has always brought me into contact with such intelligent Germans as visited Boston—where, perhaps you know, the last several years of my queer life have been passed,—and always since I heard, through our good Flimbsted folk, of what they call there Margaret Harwood's "German escapades," I have always enquired after you, in hopes of hearing some stray tidings; and thus meeting with an acquaintance of Baron Ehrenberg, I heard of your marriage, and also with the sincerest delight of your beautiful profession. Margaret, I have often thought of writing to you; still it seemed to me that it would be pleasanter to surprise you some day, as now, by suddenly looking in upon you on my way to the East. Yes, Margaret, like a true American—for, depend upon it, spite of old Flimbsted and the entail, I'm more American than English—I am on my way to Palestine and Egypt. It is but to-day I reached this Art-City; and, hearing of this grand festival, I felt certain of meeting you here. That astounding genius

K——, whose studio I visited this morning—what noble and true art, Margaret, is his!—and to whom I brought a letter from a name revered by him, promised to-night to introduce me to my dear cousin, the Baroness: speaking also of you, Margaret, in terms which truly rejoiced my cousinly heart!"

But we will not enter into the detail of their happy converse. As the mad merriment of the ball raged around them, they withdrew into the comparative silence and solitude of a nook where a few seats were placed, and a single chandelier hung among a grove of laurels, and orange, and myrtle trees, which was so arranged as to conceal the orchestra by its tall leafiness. There, with cool green shadows playing about them, they discoursed for several hours—or rather, Lushington discoursed, for Margaret had no wish to speak, but rather to listen to the pleasant stream of beautiful words which flowed from the beloved lips of her old friend,—of minds dear to Margaret through their printed thoughts, and beloved by Lushington as personal friends, of many vast plans for the future, of poetry and the deep truths of life he spoke—touching but slightly upon his own past personal career, and that only as regarded his idolized child, the little Signild, who, since her mother's death, had been the very core of his being, and anxiety about whom had for several years delayed his great journey to the East. Beautiful, indeed, was the whole spirit of the man; so imbued was it with the "love of love, the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn." From Margaret's moral atmosphere, which the heroic beauty of the Niebelungen procession had already purified, now every fog and evil meteor was cleared: she felt as though a blessed angel had winged his way through it, leaving around his track warmth, light, and sunshine.

Had Margaret, in this better frame of mind, encountered her husband, how different would have been the words formed by her lips to those burning upon them when first she entered the ball-room! But she was not called to the trial of her magnanimity! Later on in the night, Ludmilla and the Hofrath having, after a considerable search, discovered Margaret in her retreat, and the newly-found cousin had been introduced to the old friends, and there had been a deal of wonderment over this surprising arrival, and over the

Baron's surprising absence, conversation became general and of a gay character, and they all issued forth again into the carnival jollity.

That quaint and favourite German dance, the Cotillon, was beginning—a dance where the everlasting waltz is varied by merry, freakish figures introduced among it. Groups of the most fantastic character clustered around the foreground—Turks and Esquimaux, Arabs, and courtiers of Louis XIV., court-ladies in hoops, and Roman matrons, knights of the Niebelungen, and British sailors. Wherever the eye fell, it rested upon burning colour, brilliant light, and incessant movement. The music panted and sighed through the heated air, and the circle around the golden pavilion was filled with whirling waltzers, who spun around in mazy evolutions, passing beneath tall hoops of blue and silver, which were held above their heads by the merry band of fools who were stationed in long lines on either side the circle.

Through this delirious mass of life Margaret's anxious heart once more sought for her husband—but still in vain! Again the madness of the whole scene affected her brain; but it was a sick faintness and dizziness which now stole over her, and not the fever of bitter anger: she had felt herself, too, for long watched incessantly by a stranger, an Indian, whose swarthy countenance and gleaming eyes she now recollect ed had been fixed upon her ever and anon for hours, and her steps dogged by him,—who was he?—not her husband, she was certain: yet, there was a familiar something about him which troubled and perplexed her like a nightmare. With a strong effort, therefore, rallying her departing strength, Margaret intimated to Ludmilla that she would return home—Lushington would see her into her carriage, she knew,—so Ludimlla and the good Hofrath must not lose an hour of the festival on her account.

How unutterably weary, heart-sick, and bewildered did Margaret von Ehrenberg feel, as, sunk back in the corner of the carriage, she was whirled away through the darkness, from that carnival madness, to her quiet, and, until this miserable day, her happy little home! But still the memory of her cousin's pure and ennobling spirit

whispered peace and strength. Yes! she would strain every nerve, endure everything,—only, with God's help, she would, indeed, act up to her high standard of the right!

"Carl," cried Margaret, springing out of the carriage when she reached her home, "is the Baron returned?"

"He is not, gracious lady." And Margaret again felt such a faint dizziness creep over her, that it was only through an almost superhuman effort that she did not fall prostrate across the threshold.

CHAPTER VII.

A GREEN SPOT IN THE DESERT.

THE sweet voices of the bells calling to matins dropped with holy sounds through the dark heavens from the many steeples of the Munich churches, when Margaret von Ehrenberg's burning eyes closed upon her pillow, and a drowsiness creeping over her exhausted, agitated frame, she sunk into an almost lethargic sleep, in which neither the holy bells nor the maddening turmoil of the artists' ball, nor the pure countenance of her cousin, nor the memory of bitter heart-sickness, affected her, more than if she had been sleeping the quiet sleep of death itself. But this blessed peace could not have lasted long, ere she was startled by sounds which brought back her misery, her agitation, with an anguish all the more acute from the profound peace out of which she was aroused : she heard her husband's step in the adjoining room.

"Conrad!" cried she, springing up from her pillow, "Oh, Conrad, thank God you are there!"

But no answer was returned. Oh, he had not heard her, thought she ; but in a moment he would stand in her presence : a cold tremor seized her whole frame, and her throat felt parched. "Dear Conrad!" cried she, in her old voice of affection ; yet again there was no reply. In a moment more her hand was upon the lock, but she heard the bolt drawn on the other side ! She could have sank upon the ground ! For a moment the old indignation again flashed through her soul. "Conrad!" exclaimed she, in a hoarse voice, "what am I to understand by your extraordinary conduct, at a time, Oh God ! when rather it is I ——"

"Madam!" returned the voice of the Baron, as his hasty steps suddenly ceased in the next room, "Madam ! have I not already desired you to cease lecturing me ? I am, believe me, in a temper less ready to endure your goadings and childish reproaches than I was this morning, even. You've seen but the sunshine,—the tempest may break over

you if you goad me too far—so beware ! To endure your senseless upbraidings at a time, Margaret, when life is a very hell to me—” and the Baron’s words were broken by a deep groan, and a sound as though he had flung himself on the sofa.

“ Oh, Conrad ! open the door to me,” pleaded the miserable Baroness ; “ am I not your wife ? if you have bitter misery, it is I who will share it with you, who will lighten it for you : how could I goad, distress you ! Oh, Conrad ! in the name of Christ, open to me ! ”

But the Baron was once more heard pacing the room with hasty steps.

Begone with you ! I can manage my own affairs without your interference ! ” cried he, fiercely and peremptorily, through the door. Margaret slunk back to her pillow, a war of the most bitter and contradictory feelings rending her soul. Alas, some horrible misery had fallen upon her husband ; and this thought annihilated every remembrance of her own wrongs : it was this which had changed his nature, which doubtless contained within it the secret of that unworthy action about her pearls. Oh, how willingly would she forgive all,—how willingly aid him to endure all, nobly, bravely,—would he but believe this of her,—but permit it to her ! Then a voice of distrust arose within her, but with indignation and love she silenced it ; listening, listening ever from her pillow to each movement and rustle made by her husband. He seemed to her gradually to return to composure. She heard him stir up the fire in the stove,—she heard him open his *escrutoire*,—she heard him draw a chair towards it,—she heard him searching over his papers,—she heard him writing,—she heard him enter his dressing-room, where he remained a space. It was now gradually becoming light ; again and again she thought she would once more attempt to speak with him, but drowsiness stole over her as she felt that the violence of his anger was passing away.—“ Oh, patience ! patience ! ” murmured she, a smile stealing over her white face as it sank upon her pillow,—“ Patience ! patience ! and God in time will send all peace and blessedness ! ” In her dreams she seemed to hear her husband’s voice in familiar talk with Barbette, and a strange, comfortable clatter of cups and saucers.

"The Baron bid me not disturb the gracious lady for several hours," screamed Barbette's shrill voice at her mistress's ear;—"but it is quite noonday; and there has been a tall foreign gentleman just here to enquire after the lady Baroness's health this morning; and there is the note which the Baron bid me give to the gracious lady when she awoke,—he would not disturb you again, he said!"

Margaret, with bewildered eyes, read the letter which Barbette put into her trembling hand.

"My dear Wife,—Your generous heart, I am sure, will forgive the cruel and hasty words which passed my lips last night. Dearest Margaret, we will bury them in oblivion. If you knew the anguish which an unlucky piece of business has occasioned me the last day or two, you would indeed pardon my outbreak of temper. And the distress of mind I have suffered on *your* account, having been forced as, alas! you will already have seen, to clear myself by pledging your dear mother's pearls. But I knew you would yourself have been the first to offer them had you known my position. I was about to confess to you what I had done yesterday morning,—but, at the moment, your just reproaches were the last drop of bitterness in my cup,—and you know the sequel! I was too unhappy to endure the idea of the ball, and have been arranging my papers and various small matters for a short journey which I am obliged to take to settle the unpleasant little business I refer to, and which we will discuss together when I return. Dismiss all anxiety from your too anxious loving heart, dear wife; and forgive, as I know you will, your unworthy but

"Most affectionate and admiring Husband,
"CONRAD VON EHRENBURG."

"P.S. I beseech of you to forget utterly the miserable scene of last night. I do believe I was possessed by a devil. But, possessing an angel in you, the devil has soon fled from me."

Margaret read and re-read, as soon as she had dismissed her inquisitive Barbette, this singular document,—so in accordance with her former idea of the Baron von Ehrenberg in the affection it breathed,—so utterly unlike the cruel,

imperious tyrant and unprincipled schemer which he had appeared within the last eight-and-forty hours to her. But might not this confession in his letter explain all?—he had been driven weakly to commit a mean, ungenerous action by her, and thus had lost all command of himself through the bitter reproaches of his own conscience:—if so, never should he be driven from the right path again through cowardly fear. She would be mild as she would be upright. Oh, yes; she would bring all straight through the mighty power of love. Margaret did not allow herself to dwell upon anything but the hopeful side of the letter. It was so sweet to her to believe in his love, and in the possibility of his character regaining, at least *somewhat*, its former unsullied beauty in her eyes. And the prospect of struggles, whether material or spiritual, at the moment only called forth an heroic strength and glow of soul within her.

With an energy surprising to herself, she arose, and putting away all traces of the last night's mad merriment, so opposed to the stern calm thoughts which she had marshalled around her, she determined to banish every bitter remembrance, and to commence a fresh chapter of her married life. With what pleasure did she recall the presence of Lushington in Munich! Although he would remain but two or three days, still to her it should be the sojourn of a very angel: in his calm presence, breathing the celestial atmosphere of his vast charity, carried forth from the petty cares of her own personal anxieties, her spirit should gather up its strength and prepare for future campaigns.

This letter, too, of her husband's, and the information volunteered by Barbette that "the gracious gentleman had made a hearty breakfast before his departure, and had seemed vastly amiable," relieved Margaret's mind of a tremendous load of care. And, really, under the existing circumstances, and her own uncertainty regarding the Baron's conduct, it was a real satisfaction to know that her husband was safely away; for her mind somewhat misgave her when she pictured to herself how her far-seeing cousin Lushington might have drawn inferences extremely wounding to her pride had he at this particular epoch seen the baronial pair together. Margaret sighed deeply, and with a certain self-contempt in her heart, when she recognised in herself a feeling until now

utterly unknown,—a distrust of her husband and a feeling of shame connected with him! Now, thanks to this lucky journey, the effort of preserving a decent appearance of conjugal affection would be much less,—though she probably would not, as at another time, have his name ever upon her lips: his presence would not embarrass her. Yes, unnatural as, three days ago, such a resolve would have appeared to her, she determined to put all thought of her wedded lord out of her heart for the next several days,—and that for his own sake as well as for hers! Yes, she would only live in the surrounding peace.

And truly she did so. The two days spent by the cousins and Ludmilla, who was almost invariably their companion,—an extraordinary mental sympathy having shewn itself between Lushington and Ludmilla on many points of spiritual belief,—if we may so word it, were days of gold. The studios of Kaulbach and Schwanthaler were visited, and the fresh worlds of thought opened to Lushington by the deeply philosophic art of Kaulbach and by the quaint and wildly poetical creations of Schwanthaler led to spirit-stirring discussions between the friends. The rich collections of statuary and painting contained in the Glyptothek and Pinakothek, and the lovely modern churches erected by the poet king Ludwig, were duly visited and rejoiced in by these three poetical minds. No portion of this bit of Paradise remained more closely impressed upon their memories than a sledge-drive which they took one brilliant sunny afternoon to the little castle of Schwaneck, built by the sculptor Schwanthaler as a realization of many a fantastic youthful dream. There it rises solitarily and sternly upon a bend of the river Isar, hanging over its rushing green waters from a little promontory of the precipitous river banks,—a magical embodiment, in small, of the middle ages, and doubly affecting to the imagination as the creation and abode of that great and whimsical genius Schwanthaler, the glory of Munich. The thick beechen woods through which the friends drove rising in solemn leafless greyness around them from the crisp snowy carpet which overspread the earth; the deep, cloudless blue of the sky above them; the startling view from the castle-windows; the glorious vast stretch of plain, all white and glittering with the snow and

bounded by the majestic chain of the Alps, which gleamed forth in the sunlight violet, azure, and rose,—all blending with the cheerful converse of the friends,—completed an almost perfect episode in their three lives. But, spite of her resolve, poor Margaret felt ever and anon a sharp twitch of secret mental pain in recalling her husband, and there arose within her a craving after tidings of him,—she was so utterly in the dark as regarded his movements, business, and anxieties. But all these gloomy thoughts she buried deeply in her breast.

Another thing she buried also deeply in her breast ; but this was not gloomy, or one she did not dare dwell upon. On the contrary, throughout future months and years she was accustomed to draw it forth secretly and set it before her imagination, and dwell upon it with much pleasure, and build castles in the air regarding it. It was this : we have said that a singular mental sympathy showed itself between her beloved cousin and her beloved friend Ludmilla. It was a sympathy of spirit and of aspiration for the development of the ideal in life and character, which would have been almost unaccountable ; their mutual theories and aims being very original, and unlike any one's else except each others : yes, we say that this startling sympathy would have been doubly startling and unaccountable, except for one little circumstance,—and this is it : Ludmilla, you may remember, good reader, was spoken of in an early chapter of our story as the *Frau Doctorin*, which, translated into very vulgar English, is *Mrs. Dr.* ; therefore you see she was a married lady ; and yet how comes it, then, that we have never, in this veracious history, referred to her "*good and excellent consort,*" as Ludmilla's father, in his peculiar English, would have worded it ? We have never referred to him because, good man, he had several years before our friend Ludmilla appears on the scene departed from this world of imperfection on his journey to one of perfection and beauty, as himself and Ludmilla believed, where first his craving and aspiring and loving spirit could attain what it had never yet attained here—**PEACE**. This dead husband of Ludmilla, though scarcely more than a youth in years, had achieved for himself a niche among the rarest philosophic and poetic minds of his country ; but there was a

subtle, extraordinary, and mystic spirit hung around the one great work of his short life, which rendered it as a veiled tabernacle to the world at large, but which, parting at the touch of kindred spiritual seekers, revealed—so they said—the very inmost sanctuary of life. Lushington was a fellow-worker and dreamer in the same realms of thought ; the name of Ludmilla's husband had long been written upon the walls of his soul's Valhalla as the name of a valiant hero, whose sword of burning thought had slain many an evil dwarf, hideous sorcerer, and cruel giant in this weary world of ours, and whose hand had planted over their graves and demolished dungeons the herbs Charity, Mercy, and Faith, upon which fell everlastingly divine dews and sunshine. Thus when upon inquiring from Margaret whether the name of her friend denoted any connection with this cherished heroic name, which glowed ever in his soul as a watch-word of action and a beacon of safety when tossed to and fro upon the ocean of life, he heard that she had been the wife of this man, and that too the wife of his spiritual being, although their union had been that but of a few months, she stood before him encircled by a shadowy glory as of the haloes of saints. And the more Margaret told him about Ludmilla's marriage, the more did he feel interested. She told him of her enthusiastic devotion to the departing poet, whose fate she had united with her own, fully conscious of the stern inevitable parting awaiting them, but blessing her fate as glorious and enviable, in the power which was thus conferred upon her of cheering the suffering spirit by a sublime human love, and of ministering to the human wants of an angel who was still clad in the weeds of mortality. It was not with Ludmilla that Lushington, however, might venture upon any reference to the dead yet immortal poet, for Margaret told him the wound in Ludmilla's soul bled at the slightest touch. All, too, was still so strangely mysterious; according to certain revelations of Ludmilla to her friend, a wondrous spiritual bond even yet seemed to unite the pair, though separated by the gulf of death. Ludmilla constantly, in dreams and visions, declared that she was guided by her departed husband : thus all that regarded him was sacred to Ludmilla as her religion. Margaret—who, though possessing a deal of imagination, had

more of the practical and the common-place, one might almost call it, in her nature than Ludmilla—at times felt almost inclined to smile at her friend's earnest belief in these ghostly fancies ; but with Lushington it was different ; they sank into his heart, and he pondered and pondered upon them. He himself possessed that gift, whatever it is, of the mesmeriser ; and not alone his large bright eyes were endowed with the magical power of casting others into the mesmeric trance, but had themselves been opened to visions of seraphic beauty and awe.

Thus it is no wonder that these two souls sympathised with each other with a more than common sympathy, or that Margaret, whose passionate early love of Lushington had long subsided into a calm ennobling friendship, witnessing this sympathy, should suffer her imagination and her affection for these two beings, so dear to her, to weave lovingly the perhaps improbable bonds which should link the two together.

But a day of parting arrives even for the dearest of friends, and thus, willingly as Lushington would have lingered in Munich, he is speeding his way towards the Alps, across which he learns it is already possible for him to penetrate on his way into Italy.

CHAPTER VIII.

GATHERING TEMPESTS.

SEVERAL days have passed since the departure of Lushington, and yet Margaret has received no tidings of her husband. She listens hour after hour for the postman's ring ; she watches the blue-coated officials up and down the street with an anxiety hitherto quite unknown to her. She begins to feel the absurdity of her position, in being so utterly ignorant of her husband's movements. But surely he will be back immediately. This very fact of his not writing, she thinks, proves to her the possibility of his almost hourly return. Certainly it was but for a very few days that he had left home, he had taken so little luggage with him,—Barbette said only a carpet bag, which he carried in his hand ; if he were going to prolong his journey, or were detained unexpectedly, he would surely write. But day after day went on, and no letter arrived. Really it was rather odd this silence ; and she was growing very anxious to consult with him upon various little things. Barbette had made a very unpleasant discovery, about which she was extremely mysteriously loquacious with her mistress, and which certainly greatly troubled Margaret ; and this was, that a pair of silver salt-cellars, which were rarely used, and half-a-dozen dessert spoons, and a dozen silver forks, were gone ! They had all been wrapt together in a parcel, and lay in a *cheffonier* drawer in the drawing-room. There was no reason to suppose that any suspicious person had been about the place : all remained in the *cheffonier* just as usual, except this packet of plate. The only person whom either Barbette or her mistress could in the least suspect was Carl, the Baron's servant, who did not live in the house, but came at certain hours in the day—no unusual system of domestic economy in small German households—to attend to the Baron's commands. He had always shewn himself an honest man, his only apparent faults being a hasty temper and a love of gossip : and it was extremely distressing to

have any thing so miserable occur, which should cast a slur of dishonesty upon him. Barbette besought her mistress, with every demonstration of terror, not to speak to Carl, he was so terribly violent ; "and oh ! the gracious lady did not know what wretches these sort of people were. Was there not, only two years ago, that wicked servant of the poor Baroness —, who, whilst his master was out, cut his young mistress's throat, because she would not give him money to pay a debt of his, or let him pawn his master's uniform ; and then cut the servant girl's throat lest she should betray him ! Oh dear ! oh dear ! her gracious lady couldn't imagine how bad they were these kind of folks ; but she knew this as a fact, and all Munich knew it. Oh, *she* knew it ; had not she been to the wretch's execution ? and if her gracious lady doubted it, she'd show her a bit of a handkerchief dipped in the murderer's blood, which a dear friend had given her as a charm against the ague ! And could not every body any day see the poor old man, the unhappy Baroness's father, in deep mourning, crawling along the streets ? Oh dear, dear, dear ! her gracious lady would never speak to Carl about the missing silver ; he'd cut their throats, that he would, as sure as look at them !"

Margaret, although standing in less awe of Carl's unbridled temper than Barbette, had, it must be confessed, also a certain mistrust of "that kind of folk," and would willingly defer all investigation of the affair till her husband's return, knowing also well the tedious formalities of every police investigation. Oh, if he would but return ! Sometimes, also, she began to distrust poor talkative Barbette. She was excessively annoyed, but, until her husband was back, she could really take no steps to clear up this unpleasant business.

Another cause of growing anxiety she had, and this was her own shortness of money. There had been a deal of expense for the last many months, to say nothing of small extra outlay about the artists' ball, which had pretty nearly drained her private fund : certainly there was money of her husband's, she knew, in the bank ; but, without his signature, how could she obtain any of it ? Besides, the Baron had always expressed an extreme repugnance to his wife being seen publicly in any sort of money transactions of his,

and had even deposited her money himself, and in his name, in the bank. He had often himself laughed about this with her most good-humouredly. Really, it was very perplexing ! Barbette, too, worried her about getting in a fresh supply of wood, which is the fuel of Munich. "The wood was just at an end, and the gracious lady must have another wagon-load ; it would be long before the warm weather came. *Herr Je !* did she understand her gracious lady aright ? Did her gracious lady think it *was warm now* ? Why, her gracious lady's face was as blue as a bilberry ! And besides, if her gracious lady in the parlour could paint her pictures without fire, she could assure her gracious lady *she* could not cook without it in the kitchen ; and, the holy Virgin ! she would not : no, she had been out ever so early that very morning, through all the frost and snow, whilst her mistress was asleep so warm under her *plumeau*, all that long way to the wood-market ; and cold, bitter cold it was, as her poor little bowels knew, for she'd got by her devotion to her gracious lady a mighty bad cold in her inside ; and she'd bargained,—and very hard it was, since the frost set in again, to make a bargain with the rough peasants, the frost made them so impudent,—and if her gracious lady would only graciously look out of the window, she'd see what a fine beau-tous little load of wood she'd bought !"

And sure enough there was a beau-tous, *big* load of the finest beech-wood—the most expensive kind of wood, by the by—unloading, with a great jabbering of a couple of peasant men in their broad-brimmed, slouching hats, and black-velvet jackets ; and of the women, in their scarlet and their woollen petticoats, and pink and white striped boddices, who were waiting to chop up and carry away the wood. Margaret was fairly caught in Barbette's wood-trap : and her last carefully-hoarded *florins*, too ! And what a sawing and sawing, and chopping and chopping, there was for hours ! And how the gossip between Barbette and the withered old crone, in her brilliant attire, who carried up upon her shoulders, in a long basket, the sawn wood, irritated every nerve in Margaret's body, and made her feel almost frantic, and so irritable that she could not even paint !

Really it was too bad of the fascinating Baron to have left his adored wife subjected to such petty miseries !

But that very afternoon, whilst the stream of wood was still ascending the staircase, a more serious annoyance arrived. Barbette ushered into Margaret's studio a grave young man, who presented to the Baroness a wafered letter, on opening which she read, in the German character and language of course, these words,—“Messrs. Schneider and Kleider present their compliments to the highly well-born the Baroness von Ehrenberg, and beg to forward to her their account, as desired by the highly well-born the Baron von Ehrenberg.”

And hereupon followed a list of sundry coats, waistcoats, and trousers; and also of a fur-lined travelling-cloak, which, it appeared, the delightful Baron had ordered within the last week before his departure.

Margaret stood petrified as her eyes fell upon the words, —“The gracious lady will see all is correct by looking at this note, to-day received from Lausanne by Messrs. Schneider and Kleider,—the honourable Baron von Ehrenberg wrote to inform my employer that the clothes had reached him at Augsburg, as he commanded, all perfectly to his satisfaction; and you will perceive that he says, that at any time we might call with the account upon the gracious lady; and as Messrs. Schneider and Kleider are making up a rather heavy account, they have taken the liberty immediately to act upon the hononourable gentleman's permission.”

“I have not at the moment so much money in the house; but I will look over the account, and if correct attend to it,” replied Margaret, with a cold, haughty voice.

“It would greatly oblige Messrs. Schneider and Kleider if, at her earliest convenience, the gracious lady could——”

“I have already told you, that when I have looked over the account I will attend to it,—good morning !”

When the young man had bowed himself out, Margaret wrung her hands in despair, and paced the room round and round with frantic steps. “Oh, Conrad! Conrad! how bitterly cruel! Another miserable deception! Oh, God!” groaned she. “But yes, depend upon it, it is so!—yes, again I may be doing him an injustice—such bitter forgetfulness of me never can be his;—yes, depend upon it, at the bank I shall find he has made all necessary arrangements. Oh, Heaven

be praised that this suggestion has occurred to me:—yes, Conrad, only in the distress of mind you suffered, and the hurry of your sudden journey, you have forgotten to mention this!” And hastily throwing on her bonnet and cloak, she sped away to the bank.

How wildly her heart beat as she entered the quaint old portal of the banker Baron ——’s *Bureau*! how the solemn faces of the clerks, and the huge iron-bound chest, nail-studded and richly adorned with mediæval iron scroll-work, which occupied a conspicuous position in the bureau, affected her imagination: she felt—she scarcely knew why—a culprit! and as though her voice would fail her;—but no, what absurd childishness! Although she now possessed but a few kreutzers, so small and few, indeed, that the rings had slipped off her purse over them into her pocke, tthe Baron had money there, she knew—that iron-chest must disgorge some for her. “Could she speak with Baron ——?” she asked.

“He was gone home.”

“Well, then, with the principal clerk?”

“Yes, certainly—the speaker was he.”

“The Baron von Ehrenberg, her husband, ——:” at these words all the other clerks turned round and stared at her, she felt,—nay *smiled*, it seemed to her excited fancy. Oh! why did the silly blood rush to her face? “The Baron von Ehrenberg,” she pursued, in a firmer voice, “her husband, before going a short journey, had, she believed, left in their hands certain money to be paid to her.”

The head clerk’s face remained extremely unresponsive,—nay never, certainly, was a more perfect blank of a face seen.

“In the hurry of departure the Baron had not clearly explained—”

“The Baroness, for such, I presume, I must consider you, Madame,” remarked the head clerk, with extreme indifference, taking up a pen and mending it,—Margaret’s cheeks burning with indignation the while, and indignation almost choking her,—“the Baroness must have a singular want of knowledge of the highly honourable Baron’s affairs, if such is her supposition. The Baron drew out of our hands all the remainder of his money, or, to speak more correctly, we

have given him a letter of credit to the amount of his remaining capital upon — and — in Lausanne. Here," said the clerk, with his nonchalant manner if anything increasing, "the lady may see the papers relating to the transaction in our hands :" and running carelessly over a number of papers which he drew forth from his desk, he held one before the astounded eyes of the miserable wife, bearing date a week anterior to the Baron's departure. It seemed to Margaret that a sort of titter ran round from desk to desk, and the head clerk blew his nose in a remarkably sonorous manner upon his scarlet India silk-handkerchief.

Margaret, in the twilight of that cold, early March evening, was rapidly hurrying along through the busy streets and out on to the solitary, snowy plain : on and on she rushed with frantic haste : on and on, unconscious of all around her, but impelled by a bitter anguish within her soul, which urged her on, whither she knew not—she cared not ! Could she have fled utterly away from Munich, from memory, from herself, how blessed would it have been to her ! A terrible gulf seemed to yawn before her : wherever she turned for peace it fled her yearning soul : gloomy phantoms, which had long whispered with voices which she had ever ignored, now boldly stood before her, jibbering and mocking : that which she had put aside with indignant, wounded scorn, was a miserably triumphant fact—her husband's actions were actions premeditated and *base* ; though her heart shrunk from uttering the words, her reason held up before her affrighted spirit a logical thesis of his deeds.

" Oh, God ! guide thou me aright through this fiery ordeal !" murmured she, and her burning eyes, raised towards the heavens, saw calm cold stars gleaming down upon her from the dark sky, and glimmering between the shivering leafless branches of the tall poplar-trees, which in weird lines skirted the straight dreary road along which she was hurrying. She suddenly paused : the night breeze whispered gently among the leafless branches and swept over her fevered cheek,—the intense silence, alone stirred by the rustle of the breeze among the trees, and by a far-distant bell from a village church calling to vespers, smote strangely upon her heart : she seemed to feel her fevered blood pause in its course, and then calmed, as by a healthful sleep, pursue its

way through her veins gently, sweetly ; a dense mist seemed to pass from her brain—her pathway through the trials before her lay clear and keenly defined. She already had a presentiment of the very worst which could happen to her : but a courage, a fertility of imagination, a capacity of work, developed themselves suddenly within her, as though they were the divine answer to her prayer. “What matter to me, in presence of these calm stars and this whispering wind, the pitiful scorn and jeers of those ignorant clerks,” said she to her inmost soul ; “what would matter even the contempt and misconception of the whole world, provided that the divine eye recognise the truth, and bless ! There is, after all, a glory in steering, like a wise, wary pilot, among the shoals and breakers of life, carrying the human soul in safety through the most imminent of dangers, and entering the haven of rest,—though it be with riven masts and shattered shrouds ! One’s heart burns when recalling heroes and martyrs : let one’s heart burn in becoming hero—martyr even, if need be ! Is not, to every pilgrim along the chequered road of life, offered both the laurel of the hero and the palm of the saint ? Oh, that my brow may be found worthy to be shadowed by their dear leaves, besought Margaret’s trembling lips ; oh, that my astonished eyes, when first the effulgence of celestial glory bursts upon them, may be shaded and preserved from blindness by the holy shadows of these dear, dear leaves ! And, oh, let me bless the hand that wounds ! Let not, oh Father ! my words or my deeds be curses upon the mistaken, unhappy, ignorant hand which wounds : but let, rather, the evil be converted into good, both for himself and for me ! Let the consequences of his deeds towards me, who am his wife, the soul united to his in Thy sight, by my own act and deed, not now, through bitter resentment and disloyal rage, add darker blots against him ! Let me, who see with mournful, clear vision the consequences of his blindness to high honour and principle, convert, so far as in me lies, the evil into blessedness—avert his double guilt. Good, Thou hast said, ever is stronger than evil : let good intention and devoted energy cut off the current of blind, ignorant, and unreflecting evil. Yes, O Father ! I feel within my soul energy, aspiration, determination, which alone could have

been pressed forth from the heart together with tears of blood. Was not our blessed Lord the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? And who, having listened to his Evangel, ever can strive to dissever in his soul the twins, Love and Sorrow,—the two are co-existing, mutually purifying, ennobling: who knoweth not the one knoweth not the other! who willingly resigneth not his spirit rejoicingly to tread at humblest distance the Via Dolorosa, with the blessed Man of Sorrows, deserveth not the triumph and the bliss! Father, Thy will be done!"

With steps scarcely less rapid, but firmer, prouder than those that had carried her forth from the city, she now retraced her way: she perceived that no money either of her own just earning remained to her, or yet any of her husband's: she felt that all the furniture, all the few pictures which she had for years treasured as her most precious possessions—pictures which she had copied in the Dresden Gallery and the Munich Pinakothek, and which were a school of art to her—her own sketches and studies, also, must be turned into money. As far as lay in human power, every one should have their just own: she would shield her husband's honour, let whatever betide. God had endowed her with gifts which alone must be employed for the service of others, she now perceived,—not for the sole selfish gratification of her artist eyes and her artist spirit. Though it would be like parting with her very children, to part with many of those pictures, part with them she must. Thank Heaven! to part with the creative faculty within her was not demanded from her!—she, whose every fibre of the soul acknowledged the unutterable superiority of spiritual to external beauty, ought not to feel the sacrifice so very bitter; yet bitter tears swelled her heart, as she thought of selling certain of her favourites, for it seemed desecration to her. "But the more bitter the sacrifice, the worthier of my love!" sighed she. She had already determined many things in her mind which must be done: among others, she would pledge her watch immediately, it being the only valuable trinket she now possessed, since her pearls had been so miserably lost. The hour of trial had already arrived: she would do this on her way home, were it already not too late in the evening to do so. In Munich the pawnbroking

establishments are governmental, as in various other parts of the continent: in Munich, also, connected with these establishments, is a singular sisterhood—a band of old crones, facetiously designated “the coffee-sisters,” because they principally subsist upon coffee, which they meet to drink together at certain low coffee-houses. The profession of these said sisters is the carrying to the pawning establishments, for a small per-centage, in blessed secrecy, the properties squeezed by necessity from despairing mortals, reduced, like our heroine, by their dire fate to solicit the tender mercies of that benevolent relative designated by the English “my uncle,” by the French “my aunt.” Margaret had often heard of the “coffee-sisters,” and knew, it seemed, where to discover their haunts; for, passing beneath a low-browed archway, which spanned the street she had now struck into, a group of these old hags, with blear eyes, hanging lips, and skinny fingers, approached her suddenly and stealthily from out the gloom of a heavy old door. “Does the gracious lady want her little business done prettily?” chimed these cracked old voices, in discordant whispers; “We are the girls to do it pretty!”

“Here, take my watch,” said Margaret, hurriedly removing it from her neck, “You must bring me as much as you can for it,” and she placed it in the bony red hands of the most human-looking of the trio. “We’ll do it in a trice right prettily, for the pretty Madame,” grinned the crone, winking, and grimacing, and hobbling away, her sisters disappearing back again in the gloomy doorway, as suddenly as they had appeared.

Margaret paced up and down the dark streets uncomfortable enough, for it might be ten minutes, filled with inconceivable terrors about her watch having disappeared for ever. But, diabolical as the hag looked, she was honest at least, and duly placed in Margaret’s hand, with many a hollow chuckle and quaint leer, as though a corbel in an old church had been laughing, a small sum in broad silver pieces. “The dainty Madame has got but a bit of a sum for her fine gold watch; but the gentleman up yonder,” making a queer sign with her grisly finger, “has given such lots of handsome silver pieces these two days to the gentlefolks this carnival time, that he says he can’t give you a kreutzer more, ‘an you

were Queen Theresa herself—bless her Majesty.” And, kissing Margaret’s hand, much to our heroine’s astonishment and dismay, as she received a douceur somewhat above the ordinary stipulated one, the old hag, beseeching blessing upon Margaret, *and a speedy return*, vanished into her mysterious gloom.

The silver pieces were very few; still Margaret could have pressed them to her lips, so thankful was she for the relief they would afford.

“If they are but few,” said she to herself, “all the better, perhaps; they will sooner be returned.” “The world shrinks away with disgust at the mere word ‘pawn-ticket,’ yet here I have one in my empty purse, and yet not a sensation of shame do I feel in my full heart. Did we but know the secrets of many a purer, better heart than mine, probably *pawn-ticket* would there be inscribed also: ‘Truly to the pure, all things may be pure.’”

And Margaret, although she had pledged her watch, walked proudly homewards.

A certain sinking of heart some way, however, crept over her when she found herself once more within her own walls. The familiar objects seemed to fill her mind with sick thoughts; it seemed to her as though demons lurked to-night in the recesses of the room, instead of her guardian angels; the very clock seemed to tick words of distressing import. But she ordered her grand consoler and reviver, tea; and sipping it, still more and more arranged matters in her mind. She wrote down a list of all the things which she knew she herself had to pay. They were but mere trifles. There was this provoking bill of Schneider and Kleider’s,—alas! perhaps there might still be more. There was the house-rent—there were the servants’ wages. Yes, certainly, with disposing of their furniture, all could be arranged. “Oh! that Conrad had but thought of these things,—probably he would be very angry with her for doing all this,—but there was nothing to choose between his bitter displeasure, and injustice and dishonour. “No, it must be done.” Sometimes she longed to consult in her extremity with Ludmilla, but “No;” Ludmilla and her parents were poor—she could not, whatever might be her need, accept the slightest loan from these dear people. Ludmilla she

always felt, too, had someway mistrusted the Baron. "No ; she could not now to her breathe a word against him." The Hofrath, kind and learned man as he was, was no man of business ; she well knew, therefore, to consult with him would only complicate affairs. No, it was for her to act alone.

She inspected with a heavy heart her various pictures, and determined how, the first thing next morning, she would go and see — and — about disposing of them. In doing this, her eye fell upon the two extraordinary paintings sent, as the reader may remember, by Mr. Xavier. She had never learnt the history connected with them—nay, until, closely inspecting them, she discovered at the back of the frames Xavier's name and address at full, she did not even know whence they came. She now determined to send to Mr. Xavier for him to fetch them away, and being in an active, business mood, as we have seen, she wrote her letter there and then. Another letter she also wrote to the picture-dealer in England for whom she had made the copies of pictures at Dresden, proposing to copy for him at the Pinakothek. There should not remain a stone unturned in her endeavours after freedom from debt.

The evening was already, for German manners, far advanced—it might have been between nine and ten o'clock, for the deafening drum of the evening guard had sounded adown the street. It was long passed the hour for visitors, when a startling ring pealed through the house. Margaret started up breathless—perhaps it was the Baron returned ! Oh, might it only be so !

Barbette was heard to go down to the *porte-cochère* to open it, and the unaccountable but heavy footsteps of men were heard ascending with Barbette, and gruff voices were heard drowning her expostulations.

CHAPTER IX.

SHOALS AND BREAKERS.

WHITE as a ghost, Barbette flung open the studio-door, and behind her reared the tall stern green figures of a couple of gendarmes, the light from Margaret's lamp glittering and gleaming upon their shining leatherne helmets, their belts and bayonets. And behind the gendarmes loomed forth two other unrelenting figures with dogged hard faces. "Oh! they will take the gracious lady to prison, *Oh, Herr Je! Herr Je!* *Jesus—Maria—Petrus—Paulus and Nicholaus,*" screamed Barbette, hysterically flinging herself at Margaret's feet, and seizing wildly at her dress: "there's the prison omnibus below, the blessed Holy Virgin! Herr Jesus! Maria!" and she frantically wrung her hands.

Margaret, sternly pushing Barbette aside, rose white as marble, and in a haughty voice demanded the meaning of this extraordinary visit.

One of the gendarmes very curtly unfolded a terribly official looking document, by no means as short as the gendarme's manner, written upon very coarse paper, and in order that she might entertain no doubt regarding its import, read aloud, "How in default of payment of the just demands of Messrs. Schneider and Kleider, they the said Messrs. Schneider and Kleider were empowered by the police of the city of Munich to seize upon the person of Margaret von Ehrenberg, née Harwood, and wife of Conrad Adelbert Baron von Ehrenberg, and throw her into prison, until the debts contracted by her said husband, Conrad Adelbert Baron von Ehrenberg, were duly and fully paid."

"What a most unjustifiable proceeding is this, gentlemen!" exclaimed Margaret, with flashing eyes. Barbette, be it observed, during the reading of the document had picked herself up and was whimpering and sobbing with her head and arms hanging over the back of her mistress's chair. "Are you," pursued Margaret, turning abruptly to the two dogged men who accompanied the police-officers—"Are

you, pray, Messrs. Schneider and Kleider? Did I not assure you, this very day, that your bill should be settled when I had had time to ascertain whether it was correct? What plea, therefore, can you possibly have for persecuting me, when my husband is absent, in this outrageous manner? the debt is, besides, not mine: what possible right, therefore, can exist for your seizing upon my person?"

"The right which is given us by the law of the land, Lady Baroness," returned one of the men, brutally, "the debt is your husband's: it is equally the same as if you yourself had contracted it. I should suppose you know," said the man, with a coarse laugh, "that marriage makes man and wife into one flesh and bone — so it matters little which half of the married pair endures the penalties of the law! But come, Lady Baroness, we won't be hard upon you, if you'll settle this little account. It's unpleasant to *us* to be reduced to extremities; but we lose so much by the scampish system of our customers absconding, Lady Baroness, that we're determined to be pretty sharp in future; and as there are, I frankly tell you, Madam, very uncomfortable rumours got abroad about the Baron von Ehrenberg, my *Herrn Colleague* and I, to-night, at our beer-club, talked the matter over, with our friend Wolf, with whom the Baroness has had dealings, we understand," pursued the blunt speaker, with a sly wink: "and we thought, Mr. Lamm and I—Mr. Lamm, the Gentleman and Lady's glove-maker, *Residenz-Gasse*—he's also brought, as he'll show the Lady Baroness, *his* little bill, that we'd just step over to the police, and bring a couple of green stag-beetles with us to assure the Lady Baroness that we mean what we say, and do what we mean!" shouted the burly man, striking his fist upon the table, and growing vastly red in the face, as he worked himself up into an excitement. Lamm echoed the words, "we mean what we say, and we do what we mean!" also striking his fist upon the table, and shouting with anything but a lamb-like voice.

"But, gentlemen," urged Margaret, speaking quietly, but most firmly, whilst Barbette moaned and sobbed, and kept impotently wringing her hands and then falling prostrate and limp over the chair-back,—"But, gentlemen, do have a little reason and common sense!"

"Common sense, Madam!" growled the red-faced man,

who we believe was Mr. Schneider." "Common sense!" echoed Lamm, swelling himself out and endeavouring to emulate the redness and bluster of Schneider; "common sense, indeed, Madam!—that's just it: we *have* common sense."

"But will you hear me speak, gentlemen?" pursued Margaret, with an astonishing calmness and patience. "I have every intention of settling these bills of yours; but to-night it is *impossible*; I have not one-tenth part of the money in the house." "Then, if you can't pay, you must, you shall, come along with us; we'll have no more of these manner of tricks. Carry her off, police!" cried Schneider—and the tall green men stepped forward—"or pay us, Madam, pay us!" bellowed he, doubling his big fist and shaking it in her face; "we've the law on our side, and we'll have our money this night, or you shall sleep upon prison straw!"

Margaret drew back with a mien so calm yet imperious that the very gendarmes dropped their arms by their sides, and stood stock-still, as if being drilled.

"Touch me at your peril!" cried she, with flashing eyes. "I have promised to pay you, if you remain civil: if you force me away to-night, I will *die* in prison rather than that one *gulden* of mine shall ever pass into your hands. It is infamous persecution, and you will bitterly rue any insult offered to me. Remember I am an ENGLISHWOMAN, and neither prisons nor police shall move me from breaking my word. *Touch me, and not one gulden shall you have!* But my intention is honourably to pay every *kreutzer* of the money owing to you, if you behave as men and not as fools. I give you my word as an Englishwoman to do this."

Margaret's words were spoken with such extraordinary firmness, courage, and authority, that the blustering cravens slunk back like dogs who hear the angry voice of their master. A silence fell upon the police and upon the two creditors, profound as death for a second. Then the gendarmes drawing the two men aside, there was a muttered conversation of a few minutes, the only words of which that reached the ears of Margaret being Schneider's hoarse whisper.

"But if she set off in the night, where are we then, pray you?" and Lamm's echo in a higher key, "where are we then, pray you?"

"Madam," spoke the gendarme after a few moments, still holding in his hand the warrant—"If you faithfully promise to settle the debt owing to these honourable gentlemen within the space of three days from this time, the honourable gentlemen have agreed to spare the gracious lady the painful necessity of accompanying us to the prison. But the gracious lady must henceforth consider herself a prisoner in her own house; to assure which the honourable gentlemen will leave me as guardian of their debtor—the gracious lady——"

"But if the Lady Baroness does not pay us!" muttered Schneider, clenching his fist as he and Lamm retired, "let Madame prepare for prison straw and prison fare; for by —— she shall pack off there!"

In a few minutes the sound of the retiring wheels of the prison-van were heard, and Margaret stared around her as if woke out of some astounding dream.

And, probably, merely an astounding dream would Margaret have considered the whole affair, had not there been the tall gendarme still left standing in the middle of her little studio, as a voucher of the unpleasant reality of all that had just passed.

Barbette, too, was still there; and now she stiffened herself up from her limp hanging across the chair-back, and burst out into a passionate lament upon the ill luck that had befallen her "in being with a gracious lady who could not pay her debts, and was like to be whipped off to a nasty damp prison. And *her wages—her wages*—oh, but the Blessed Virgin, she must, she must have her wages! Let the gracious lady remember the poor servant's wages! But, yes, heaven be praised! there *was* law for the poor servant in Germany, there was a police,—thanks be to the Blessed Virgin!" And tossing her head whilst she wrung her hands, Barbette flounced out of the room, and flung herself crying upon her bed in her own comfortable little chamber.

Margaret neither heard the words nor saw the toss of the head. She was glancing over, with bitter astonishment, the bill of Lamm, "Gentleman and Lady's Glove Maker," *Residenz-Gasse*. There were white kid gloves, straw ditto, lavender ditto, black ditto, blue satin stocks, black satin ditto, white satin ditto, to an amount so astounding that

Margaret believed herself certainly gone mad. And the dates, too!—they extended from the day before the Baron's departure, when he appeared plentifully to have supplied himself, back to the time of their marriage. Good heavens! why, here was the identical white satin stock in which he was married, and doubtless there were his wedding gloves also! Margaret fairly gasped with horror.—“Oh, Conrad, Conrad, what miserable madness!” murmured she, forgetful of the presence of the man in green; but he could not, as it happened, have understood her words, as they were uttered in English.

“The gracious lady will pardon me? She will give me her *parole d'honneur* not to escape;” said he, smiling, and yet with a sort of sympathy in his manner that touched Margaret. “I will no longer intrude; I will smoke my pipe in the kitchen;” and, bowing with the air of a general, the gendarme retired.

But Margaret recalled Barbette’s extraordinary humour; and feeling, strange as it may appear, that in the guise of a jailer this man really was a friend to her, she followed him, and not only with kind words, but even by setting before him meat and wine with her own baronial hands, she made him welcome in her house. She did not wish him to have much communication with Barbette, so she insisted on his taking up his quarters in the sitting-room adjoining her studio. There she arranged the sofa for him, and gave him books to read she would even herself have lighted the fire in the stove,—for it was a bitterly cold night,—but this the gendarme prevented with such politeness and delicacy of manner that Margaret felt the tears start to her eyes. The man would not sit down in Margaret’s presence, but, standing with his head bowed, as she was about to wish him “good night,” respectfully addressed her in the following words:—

“The Baroness von Ehrenberg will not take it as a liberty if I were to offer a few words of advice?”

“I should be most happy to receive them, for I stand greatly in need of advice,” said Margaret, with real emotion.

“I do not think it is any betrayal of my trust if I recommend the Baroness von Ehrenberg to release herself, if possible, as speedily *as possible*, from the hands of Messrs. Schneider and Kleider, for they are men extremely unre-

lenting and severe. Has the lady Baroness no friends with whom she could consult? Has she no means to raise ready money on the morrow; as I believe, from what I have casually heard, that other creditors will on the morrow present themselves? He must confess, pursued the good man, with increasing earnestness, that the lady Baroness's position was one of extreme perplexity, and if there were any means which could suggest themselves,—any friends with whom she could consult? The lady Baroness's servant had shown herself so unfeeling,—had also, he understood, done a deal of mischief in the town by gossiping about the affairs of the lady Baroness,—might he propose something? He had a little son, the trustiest little fellow under heaven; he would send for him on the morrow, and any messages, any letter that the lady Baroness might want delivering, any little errands, in short, that the lad could do, he should do; it would be better than sending the maid. The lady Baroness would, he hoped, pardon the liberty he had taken in thus freely speaking; but he really was troubled to see such a kind lady in distress, and such a beautiful artist too!—The lady Baroness would perhaps pardon him speaking so much, and about himself; but he had a great, a very great love of pictures,—painted a little himself, though but poorly of course, in his leisure; and hoped some day his little Ernest,—that was his dear little son,—would be a real painter, if he only could get him into the Academy of Painting:—that was the ambition of them both.

Margaret, greatly affected by the good gendarme's delicacy and politeness, and interested in the poor man and his little son, accepted his friendly offer. And, turning over in her mind her position, rendered now doubly embarrassing by this imprisonment within her own walls, she determined at the earliest opportunity next morning to send for Ludmilla and the Hofrath.

Margaret, we can well imagine, passed the remainder of the night in anxious thought and scheming for the approaching troubles, and not in sleep. Soon after dawn she heard a clear child's voice in the adjoining room talking with her jailer. It was little Ernest, whom his father had contrived in some mysterious manner to summon,—how it is needless to enquire, as every body knows German police in their

movements are proverbially mysterious. However, when Margaret entered the room, there, seated on his father's knee, was a large, blue-eyed urchin, with flaxen curls parting luxuriantly upon a broad forehead. He was nine or ten years old, although he did sit on his father's knee ; and such a bright intelligent little Ernest he seemed, that it was no wonder his father was proud of him. The gendarme put him hastily down as Margaret entered, and rose up, but not before Margaret had observed that little Ernest had been showing his father a childish drawing, in which glowing yellow and red warriors formed the chief subject of interest.

To little Ernest were confided by his father Margaret's letters, with many injunctions as to which must be posted (among these, by the by, was the letter about Xavier's pictures,) and which must be delivered by Ernest himself. The lad buttoned them up in a little leathern pouch which was slung around him, and marched off with a gravity and importance worthy of a diplomatic envoy.

It was not long, we may imagine, before the affectionate Ludmilla and her kind but somewhat muddle-headed father were with Margaret. The summons, though worded in the least alarming manner, had of course greatly surprised them ; and when upon arriving they saw a gendarme gravely pacing the ante-room, and had the door all but flung in their faces by Barbette, who, with her eyes and nose swollen with crying, bounced back into her kitchen murmuring mysterious words ; and, above all, when they perceived poor Margaret seated before a table covered with papers,—and she looked at them with a countenance so pale and haggard, and with eyes so sunken and wild that she might have been one just passed through the crisis of a terrible fever,—the good father and daughter stood for a moment transfixed with alarm and miserable foreboding.

In a few concise and rapid words Margaret acquainted her friends with the dreadful position in which she found herself ; shielding her husband, when she did mention him, however, in a marvellous manner. She also told them her plans for emancipating herself in brief words, and besought their advice and friendly aid.

As for the old Hofrath he was almost speechless with indignation, both against the fascinating Baron and Schneider

and Kleider ; and when his words did come forth, they threatened to be so uncompromisingly vindictive, especially against the first-named individual, that Ludmilla had to give his arm a most merciless and unexpected squeeze, perceiving, as she did, an ashy paleness creeping over Margaret's quivering lips ; and the old gentleman's hurricane terminated in a violent blowing of his nose, a wiping of his spectacles, and a vigorous shaking of Margaret's cold hand.

" My dear, dear child ! my poor, dear child !" said he, with both his hands still shaking and squeezing Margaret's as though he would crush the very bones ; " a bad, nasty, nasty business ; but we must, we will set it right as far as the money goes. As to your husb—— ; but I shall never forgive myself *there*. Ludmilla, we must, we will get things all right." And the old Hofrath with trembling hands readjusted his spectacles, and set himself down with mighty energy to look over the papers which Margaret laid before him. He was, we have already said, reckoned extremely muddle-headed about business and money accounts ; but his affection and indignation on this occasion seemed to develope unexampled acuteness in him ; and with Ludmilla's and Margaret's assistance he soon mastered the whole affair in a truly marvellous manner.

They held, as you may imagine, a regular conclave, and it was determined that money must immediately be raised sufficient to stop the proceedings of the vindictive Schneider, Kleider, and little Lamm. Other creditors might appear, " but sufficient for the hour was the evil thereof." Another thing the good Hofrath undertook, and this was seeing the landlord of the house, with whom Margaret had foreseen disagreeables, as probably he would forbid a sale taking place of the furniture until his rent was paid, which rent, in fact, only *could* be paid by poor Margaret from the money which the furniture would bring.

Ludmilla insisted upon Margaret's reposing herself for an hour or two after her dreadful night ; and in order to insure her sleeping, which Margaret declared was utterly impossible, Ludmilla administered a few wondrous homeopathic globules, which she declared never failed in their marvellously soporific effect, and which she carefully took from a little homeopathic medicine chest always carried

about by her. Ludmilla had a vast deal of the occult in her nature: she administered the magic medicine with an air truly worthy of an enchantress; and Margaret, soothed it might be by the presence of her friends, and by a growing hope of security, as well as by the potent medicine, laid her throbbing head upon her pillow, which her beloved Ludmilla shaded from the sunshine now streaming in through the windows.

"I will be as jealous a guardian of you, dear Margaret," said her friend, kissing her eyelids, "as even the good gendarme outside. Keep calm; I will permit no one to disturb you, whatever fierce lions or lambs in wolves' clothing they may be."

And Margaret slept a deep death-like sleep, which not even the quick impatient ring of the little Hofrath could disturb, as, full of bustle and satisfaction, he came to announce that he had been with the landlord, "and really found him quite a reasonable man—quite. As their dear unhappy young friend had said, there *was* nothing in this world like straight-forward dealings with people. People could not distrust you if you candidly, honestly, approached them. Yes, yes; heaven be praised! all would be arranged in that quarter. And now, whilst their dear young friend slept, he would go and see — and — about disposing of her pictures, poor young thing! poor clever young thing! He wished he'd *somebody* under his thumb, he did; but never mind, never mind! And she had said he might dispose of those two drawings of the 'Hurricane of Life'—poor thing! poor thing! she's in the hurricane just now. But, Ludmilla, we'll surprise her when I return," pursued the good little man, with a mysterious benevolent nod to his daughter, who had stood with her finger upon her lips at Margaret's door, beseeching silence—"we'll surprise the dear, sweet lamb!" And carrying off the two designs, which he already, before going to the landlord's, had placed in a portfolio, he vanished with the brisk step of a youth.

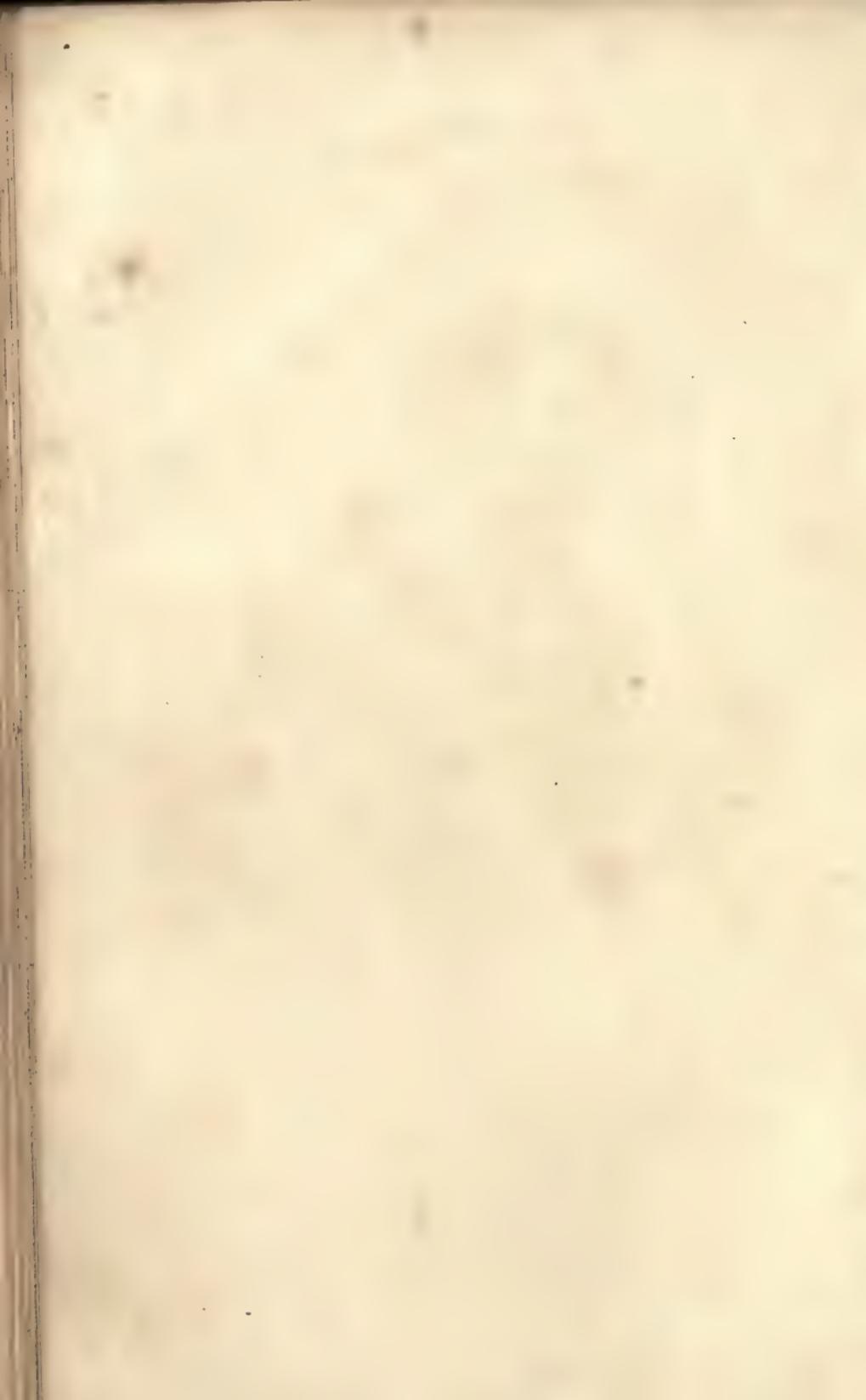
When the good old gentleman returned, which was towards evening, Margaret was risen after a most refreshing sleep, over which Ludmilla had watched like a true guardian angel as she was. There had been a host of small creditors with their bills, all of whom Ludmilla had seen;

and, speaking with her firm and gentle manner, had assured them that the Baroness von Ehrenberg would, in the course of a few days, settle these accounts as soon as she had arranged her affairs, which she, assisted by the Hofrath Rosenthal, was now doing. It was wonderful the effect of Ludmilla's manner upon these people, seconded as it was by the name of the Hofrath, who, although having the character among his immediate friends of a "muddlehead" in business, and although he had not the repute of being rich, nevertheless stood very high in Munich for probity and honour. Ludmilla had also taken upon herself another piece of business, and this was discharging Barbette, and paying her her wages, there and then, out of her own private funds, which she had stolen a half-hour during Margaret's deep sleep to fetch from home; at the same time desiring a certain poor needlewoman of her acquaintance to come to Margaret's home that evening as temporary servant.

Barbette, as soon as she received the "blessed banknotes" for her wages, fell into ecstacies of devotion to her adored mistress, with whom "she desired to live and die. Oh, why! oh, why would the *Frau Doctorin* so cruelly tear her away from her adored, her divine mistress! Oh! she would die at her adored mistress's feet!"—and she made a violent attempt to burst into Margaret's chamber, to sob and tear her hair and wring her hands upon her mistress's bed. But Ludmilla cut all very short by shutting the door upon her face; whereupon Barbette, in great dudgeon, packed up her traps, and departed to gossip through the town with tenfold violence, and to pour into the ears of the *Frau Majorin's* cook tales to the fascinating Baron's, and to the artist Baroness's, and to the fair Ludmilla's discredit, which were enough to have made their hair stand on end with horror could they only have heard them, and which were, of course, duly repeated immediately afterwards to the *Frau Majorin* by her cook; and, alas that it should be so! these tales found in the *Frau Majorin's* empty mind a corner where they took root, and budded and blossomed and produced such poisonous fruit, that the good Ludmilla and poor unhappy Margaret were greatly surprised and no little pained henceforth, when meeting the good lady *Majorin* upon the common stair-case of the house, or, later on in our



The Frau Mayoren!



story, in the street, to find themselves “cut dead” by Margaret’s formerly fussy neighbour. Yes, the time had been when the *Frau Majorin* had everlastingly been sending up messages to “her dear Baroness”—had everlastingly been bursting in upon Margaret’s quiet studio with such weariful tittle-tattle and bustle, and yet really with such apparent kindness of heart, and such actual *hand and foot* service, that our heroine had been distracted with contending sentiments regarding her neighbour. In several instances, really, she had received such acts of a rough physical kindness, such as the sending up of a delicate dish of the *Frau Majorin’s* own making for the fascinating Baron’s supper; or, the *Frau Majorin’s* compliments, and if the *Frau Baronin* had any little commissions in the town, the *Frau Majorin* was going out shopping, and would be delighted to execute them for the *Frau Baronin*; or, it might be a beautiful present for the Christmas tree, or for a name or birth-day. In short, so many of these neighbourly offices had passed from the *Frau Majorin* to Margaret, and been received by her, that Margaret had persuaded herself that her neighbour “was a real good soul, though common-place;” and, in order to relieve herself of a sense of uncomfortable obligation, had painted her portrait and made her a present of it in a handsome frame. And this said portrait now hung upon the drawing-room wall, just below the ceiling where, throughout the day we are writing about, was heard by the curious prying ears of the *Frau Majorin* the tramp, tramp, of the good gendarme, as he paced to and fro.

Yes, portrait and all were forgotten!—washed out by the great scandal going on. The *Frau Majorin* that afternoon, at a coffee-party, related all she knew about it—and a considerable deal more also—to a group of her gossip-loving friends, among whom was a friend of our old acquaintance “the near-sighted court-lady;” and these two worthy dames became flint and steel to each other, and such sparks of indignation and virtue did they strike forth between them, that it was enough certainly to set all the female population of the honourable and virtuous city of Munich in a blaze;—and after burning up thus publicly the characters of Margaret and Ludmilla,—strange to say, the fascinating Baron’s faults were lightly passed over by his female judges! How

was it possible that the *Frau Majorin*, in her calm dignity and with unspotted fame, could possibly do less than bear her testimony against "dishonest conduct, and light behaviour, and indecorous studies!" for poor Margaret's study of anatomy, and her anatomical figure, and her drawing from the life, had been brought forth against her as heinous crimes; so when the *Frau Majorin* met "these evil women" upon the stairs or in the street henceforth, she cut them dead as stones! Oh, virtuous and gentle *Frau Majorin!* with your sweet beseeching glance in your pictured eyes, how could you do otherwise? Your very nurse-maid, and cook, and footman, caught the infection of virtue, and cut the two evil ones dead also. And you, little curly-headed Lily, how could you be so degenerate as to rush towards Margaret, after her wickedness, and bury your face lovingly in her hands, holding it then up laughingly to be kissed? You remembered many a kind word and dainty bunch of grapes, or delicate biscuit, degenerate child! But your mother, with a hasty cuff, taught you your lesson, and trained you up in the way she would have you go!

Alas! among the many wounds which her misfortune struck into our heroine's heart, where many a spiritual sword buried its point, as seen in the pictured Mater Dolososa's, the wound from the sword of woman's unkindness was not wanting—that bitter sword of sister's hard-heartedness to sister; for a woman's tongue, when dissecting a woman's character, can become sharper than steel, harder than adamant; the milk of love can turn into poisonous gall, the honey of smiles into the mildew of inuendo. The tiger is fierce, the hyena is relentless; but neither so relentless nor fierce as a silly, ignorant, idle, gossiping woman, when once she attacks, tooth and nail, the character of a sister in anywise fallen beneath the censure, whether just or unjust, of the world. But, thank God! if there are *Frau Majorins* in the world, there are also Ludmillas and Margarets.

But we are rather anticipating. Let us return to our good Hofrath as he enters Margaret's studio, smiling like a May-day, and, seizing Margaret's listless cold hand, presses it with tenderness to his withered lips.

CHAPTER X.

RAINBOWS.

" My dear child, my poor dear child ! his Majesty, God bless him ! has purchased your sketches of the ' Hurricane of Life ; ' he is delighted to possess them. They are now in the palace ! Here is a lovely little roll of bank-bills, and—what at another time you would, I know, prize above any money—a few lines traced by the Poet-King, expressing his admiration of your sketches, and a desire that you should design him a set of six drawings similar to the Hurricane, but from any subject most congenial to your taste ! "

A faintness of joy, such as Margaret had fancied never again could quicken her soul, rushed over her ; her limbs failed her, and sinking back into her chair, she burst into a flood of tears, which rolled over her cheeks in torrents, as she lay, white and cold as marble, upon the cushions. The Hofrath and Ludmilla wept with her. Then there were words of deepest gratitude both to God and man, and heart to heart embraces of the three friends. Ludmilla covered the old gentleman's brow with kisses, and then folded her beloved Margaret in her loving arms,— " And — and — ? " asked Ludmilla after the first effusion of joy was over, " what of them ? have they agreed to take any of Margaret's pictures ? "

" Yes, I have made satisfactory arrangements with them ; and they would also employ our dear young friend, if she find the time sufficient for it, in making a copy of the Fra Angelico and the little St. Michael of Raphael in the Pinakothek for a connoisseur from Vienna. So there is plenty of work in store for our dear, indefatigable, noble-spirited friend here ! God always helps those who will help themselves, you see, my dear daughters."

Ludmilla now glided out of the room, leaving our heroine and critical friend in deep discourse about the present and the future. The needle-woman had not yet made her

appearance. Carl, the man, had been out, no one knew where, all day : “*he* must have his discharge, now that some money has come into the house,” thought Ludmilla ; so Ludmilla prepared the tea, and brought it in herself; and most strangely delightful was the contrast presented between this cozy evening, when Margaret, her breast filled with gratitude, sat between her friends at a warm tea-table, and the night before, when she had wandered frantically across the snowy plain, and later on had been all but dragged to prison.

The good gendarme, we may be sure, was not forgotten. Ludmilla and the Hofrath were delighted by what Margaret had told them about him, and he seemed scarcely less delighted to see “the kind lady and clever artist” in a fair way to escape the clutches of hard creditors. His little Ernest had been again, in the course of the day, to see if he could be of any service ; and Ludmilla, at Margaret’s desire, had given him a variety of coloured chalks and some drawing-paper, which were gifts scarcely to be believed in by the child ; he had stared with the biggest of round eyes, and then darted off with his prizes, scarcely even staying to return thanks. This evening he had returned with a sheet full of more wonderful red and yellow warriors than ever, which were exhibited now at the tea-table to the critics of art, the Hofrath and Margaret. The father blushed a delightful rose up from the roots of his black moustache to the roots of his black hair, as they commended the efforts of his boy, and prophesied in him a second battle-painter, Hess. The little lad, however, was far too busy with creating fresh warriors, as he sat upon the floor, at his father’s feet, to hear their praise.

About an hour afterwards, the good gendarme being relieved from his post, volunteered to seek out the abode of the still absent needle-woman, and dispatch her to the Baroness’s. There was, it seemed, nothing that the father and little son were not ready to do for her.

“I wish this Pfau, the needle-woman, would come,” said Ludmilla : “perhaps she has bought another set of the four seasons and having beautified her little room therewith, is again enamoured of it, and remains sitting in silent admiration before her pictures, instead of going out to her work ! This really happened once in my experience of poor Pfau, dear Margaret ! She is a vast lover of the arts, poor thing, and

nothing could induce her for a whole week to leave home after she bought her four grand gaudy prints. ‘No, no,’ said she, ‘I’ve got a bit of beauty in my room; I can’t go out—and I’ll do no nasty, boring mending: I’ll e’en be as the angels in heaven are, and do no work! And oh! bless the Lord God! in heaven there’ll be no stockings and drawers to darn and patch—so I like the idea of heaven mightily!’ To fully appreciate poor old Pfau’s anticipations of heaven, dear Margaret, you must know that darning students’ stockings, and patching their drawers, is poor Pfau’s chief occupation and bread-winner upon this prosaic cold earth, where, even should there be such things as angels, they must needs wear stockings and drawers! But here is our poor old Pfau in reality,” cried Ludinella, running to open the door, as a ring was heard. And poor old Pfau it was, who accompanied Ludmilla back into the room, curtseying and looking very bewildered and half crazy, but very harmless.

Ludmilla agreed to take up her abode that night with Margaret, in order to keep her spirits from flagging, of which, however, at the moment, there seemed little fear, for Margaret’s tears had changed into smiles ; smiles, though chastened by many a sick pang in her soul, yet still smiles like warm sunshine were lying upon her countenance.

But we must hasten over a portion of our heroine’s troubles, merely touching hastily upon one or two points.

The following day a fiacre drove hastily up to the house, and a handsome, dark-complexioned young man sprang up the stairs to Margaret’s door. There he might have been seen to pause for a second, press his hand convulsively upon his heart, run his fingers wildly through his hair ; and, with a singular quivering of the muscles, passing over his handsome features, he, with a sudden jerk, pulled the handle of the bell.

It was Xavier, who had received Margaret’s letter about his paintings ; a letter which only confirmed various unpleasant conjectures which for months had been torturing him, and which strangely coincided with the distressing news which had been hinted upon his arrival in Munich by various acquaintance that very morning, of whom he had enquired about Baron Von Ehrenberg.

Margaret was alone, standing in the midst of a great confusion dusting the two old paintings in question, preparatory to packing them up, when Xavier entered the room. Again the convulsive twitching passed across his countenance as his eyes fell upon Margaret and the pictures ; and his voice failed him, so violently did his heart throb.

"Oh, I am glad, Mr. Xavier," said Margaret, politely but coldly turning and addressing the young man, "that you have come to fetch your curious pictures,—I had no conception for months to whom they belonged,—and it was only in the midst of the confusion we are in now that I discovered, luckily, your name at the back. I feared at one time that they might, in spite of any remonstrance from me, have been seized upon and sold ; so I am glad you have come for them."

Xavier returned no answer at all, but stood there with his hat held in both hands before him, and his eyes rivetted with a most intent and mournful expression upon Margaret. "She is unconscious—quite, quite unconscious : It is as I believed, as I feared !" murmured he to himself : "the miserable scoundrel, the hardened wretch ! But this innocent, honourable being shall no longer be deceived—why should she be deceived and preyed upon by a human vampire ?" And his gaze became fiery, and a dark anger lightened from his eyes, at the same time that a mournfulness about the mouth mingled strangely with the indignation of his eyes. This gaze was so odd and unaccountable to Margaret, that, much to her annoyance, she felt a burning flush suddenly overspread her neck and brow.

"Sir, these *are* your pictures, I suppose ? If so, will you kindly see about their immediate removal ?" And with a certain hauteur she pushed them towards Xavier.

"My gracious lady," at last burst from his lips, "my dear lady—how shall I explain to you—how open your eyes to the vilest deceit which has been practised upon you ? My anger almost overpowers me—prevents my proper use of terms—makes me break through all ordinary rules of politeness. But I perceive in all this, but one more base deceit—one more cowardly trading upon a sweetness, a generous confidence."

"Oh stop ! recall these words—every word, every accent of reproach, I beseech !—I command you !" cried Margaret,

quivering with horrible anticipation, and at first moving towards Xavier with a face of anguish from which the bright flush had suddenly vanished and left white as ashes : then she sank upon the sofa like one smitten down by a fierce hand.

Xavier paced the room with hasty steps, his head sunk upon his breast, his hands clenched by his sides, and his flashing eyes restlessly turning towards Margaret, as she sat, trembling like an aspen-leaf, upon the sofa ; and, whenever his eyes fell upon her, the mournfulness mingled again in strange discordance with the anger : and so he paced the room for several minutes in silence ; and in silence she sat upon the sofa.

"Mr. Xavier," at length hoarsely spoke Margaret's voice, the tones coming up from the depths of her very being, where many a string of that tender and mystical instrument, the heart, had been jarred and snapped, "I feel that one who has ever spoken of you as his friend has in some strange way, to me unknown, done you wrong : the pictures are connected with this wrong, perhaps—perhaps I also : let me hear truly how this affair stands : let no anger, no hasty short-sighted anger, blind you : if I can do aught to make all right, it shall be done. I desire, God in heaven knows!"—and here Margaret's eyes gleamed with the light of earnest prayer, as they glanced upwards,—"solely to know the truth, and then strongly to act the way that God's voice directs within my soul. Speak all ; but, oh, my Father, do Thou let him speak in mildness—let me hear in charity!"

And Xavier, standing with his eyes fixed upon her now calm countenance, severe almost in its coldness, like one acting by the command of a magician, dispassionately stated the bare facts of the transaction regarding the copying of these pictures. He simply said that various other money transactions had passed between him and the Baron, but he entered into no detail, gave way to no invective ; the severe mood of calm justice seemed to have passed even from Margaret to him : or, rather, he seemed converted into a mirror, ready to reflect every phase of feeling of her, who, unconsciously to himself, was becoming each moment the genius of his fate.

"I need not to see that paper," said Margaret's hoarse

voice, as Xavier unfolded a memorandum in the Baron's well-known hand-writing ; and she closed her eyes suddenly and shrank involuntarily together. " I shall copy the pictures, of course—it is a point of honour : say no more Mr. Xavier—I should be uneasy any other way : take charge of them for a few days : grant me a few months time : all shall be done,—yes, yes ! I feel deeply, deeply your kindness, but I must and *will* do this. As to the other obligations, alas ! I know not what to say : I stand like one before whom the earth has suddenly opened into a yawning chasm. Oh, Mr. Xavier ! both you and I, through blind, mistaken affection, have done wrong by him. It was made so easy, through our mistaken kindness, for him to fall ! We must suffer through our blindness, and he also ! Had we not indulged his weakness, each in our own peculiar way, he might have had the strength to exert himself. God alone can judge in such sad cases as these !" and Margaret rose, and, with hands pressed upon her brow, slowly paced the room.

Xavier could have flung himself at Margaret's feet, and vowed himself her devoted slave in life or death ; but he would as soon have really thought of doing this, as of revealing to so pure a soul as hers all the weaknesses and peccadilloes of his somewhat reckless life. But although he felt intense indignation against the Baron, both for Margaret's and his own private wrongs and losses, and although his soul was steeped with a tender sympathy for Margaret—the queen of his idolatry—still, such a queer medley are human beings, both of good and bad, that his prevailing feeling during the latter part of his interview was intense joy in the absence of the Baron, and in the prospect he saw opening before him of frequent intercourse with this interesting woman, and in the power of materially assisting her through her troubles and difficulties.

Xavier, after the first surprise and pain of this unpleasant disclosure relative to the pictures, entered so earnestly into the consideration of Margaret's affairs, which, by intuition almost, he seemed acquainted with ; suggested such useful things to be done ; volunteered to see various creditors, in company with Hofrath Rosenthal ; commended her determination of steady industry, and the stern following of duty, so

warmly, and all in such a delicate and grateful manner, that Margaret, before he left her, felt a belief arise in her mind that in him she should find a wise and efficient friend.

And so he proved himself to be. The Hofrath and Ludmilla were delighted with him, and praised him for his generosity and forbearance towards the fascinating Baron ; abusing the Baron, also, to their heart's content, most thoroughly, behind poor Margaret's back.

CHAPTER VII.

A CONCLUSIVE LETTER, AND A NEW BEGINNING.

AND now a month or more has passed since that terrible night when Schneider and Kleider had come with the prison-van to carry off our poor heroine. The storm has laid itself, thanks to various favourable circumstances! but a mighty change has come over poor Margaret's external "surroundings," as the Americans would say, as well as over her mental condition of some few, very few, months past.

She is now, to all appearances, a deserted wife,—for since she has taken up her abode in her new home, which we will shortly describe, a letter had reached her from her husband—seemingly it had been delayed a fortnight or more, since it reached Munich—how, Margaret was at a loss to tell; but we, who have the privilege of peeping, like a very Asmodeus, into any home or human heart, however sacred or secret, if necessary for the elucidation of our story, know that immediately after Margaret had left her old home in the Frühlings Strasse, this letter arrived for her. The postman, finding the Baroness von Ehrenberg's home deserted, rang at the door of the *Frau Majorin*, to enquire the address of the Baroness von Ehrenberg; but neither the *Frau Majorin's* cook, nor the *Frau Majorin's* nurse-maid, nor the *Frau Majorin's* footman, nor yet the *Frau Majorin* herself, who was at last appealed to, chose to tell where the Baroness von Ehrenberg was to be found, nor yet would take charge of the letter: so it lay a whole fortnight before its rightful owner was discovered. Had the virtuous *Frau Majorin* only known this, it would have been a decided comfort to her; because just at this time she was especially full of bitterness against poor Margaret. "Such a gallavanting as there had been day after day of that tall, black-eyed young man—a rich goldsmith from Augsburg, she'd heard say he was—up stairs and down, at all hours of the day, to my lady Baroness's! Yes, yes; it was plain enough to see the cause of that delightful man Baron von Ehrenberg leaving his

wife: no wonder, no wonder!" And the good *Frau Majorin* and her friends held up their virtuous hands and shook their virtuous heads in terrible amaze and disgust,—especially the friend of the friend of the near-sighted Court lady.

But let us see what the delightful Baron says of himself:

" My beloved and ill-used Wife,—I plead no apology but my hapless fate for all the misery which I know must have overwhelmed you,—through me, alas! brute that I am to continue to breathe after all that has occurred to you! But I foresaw the evil impending—I *confess it!* I confess that my courage failed me—and I fled! Yes; you I knew to be strong enough to bear any distress like a true heroine. For myself—oh, may I still dare to call you *dear*, DEAR Margaret—there was no hope, no power of action left! *I fled!* spurn the letter from you. Scorn ever again to breathe my worthless name! I have been weak, wicked, but, oh, I am not ungrateful! Heaven above is my witness! never, never shall I be ungrateful. I am going where, perhaps, never again will you hear from me. Seek not to know my fate. If good comes to me, you shall hear,—not unless. Long enough have I been a burden, poor Margaret, upon you. I dare not ask what you have done at Munich—all that you do will be well done. For myself, I have endured bitter misery of mind, and bitter want even of the common necessaries of life. I have been living, for the last several weeks, upon the money produced by certain silver articles which necessity obliged me to carry away with me. Oh! the misery of one's fate reducing one to such paltry meanness. Oh, Heaven forgive me my unnumbered sins, and my bitter cruelty to you, Margaret!

" Your unworthy, despairing-to-death Husband,
" CONRAD VON EHRENBURG."

There was no date to the letter, but there was a Swiss post-mark upon it: otherwise, no trace as to the writer's whereabouts. It is very possible that Margaret might have discovered her husband through the police and through his passport. His creditors would have done so, assuredly, had not Margaret been on the spot to stop their mouths by

her hard-earned money. But neither she nor they traced him out, or even attempted so to do. The effect produced by the letter was certainly different, very different; from what the writer had intended, as, seated in a most comfortable room in a most comfortable inn, the fascinating Baron had penned it, his diamond ring glittering upon his hand, his face anything but emaciated, his dress anything but bespeaking sordid poverty. The silver forks certainly had been converted into money; but *that* was not all that he had had to subsist upon. He smiled instead of wept as he penned his distressing epistle. "That will touch her! that will keep her heart tender towards me, when, at some future day, I fly again to the arms—and clever, industrious hands!—of my dear Margaret! She *is* a right good creature, and desperately fond of me,—and desperately fond of her painting, too! She may just as well indulge the two passions at once, and make me the most blessed of men! Grateful! aye, that am I, sure enough—excellent, capital wife! I'll prove that some day, when I return to the sweets of home and to a hard-working wife!"

So soliloquised our heroine's husband; and then, sealing his epistle, sauntered forth to post it on his way to a fashionable promenade, where he would be the admired of all beholders.

Margaret had just finished arranging her little studio in her new home when the letter arrived. It was a small room, very lofty, with one tall and wide window to the north. The walls were painted of a dull red; but this failed to give a warm character someway to the room. The window looked down over a number of untidy suburban gardens, where many a white and green summer-house, and many an unmown grass-plot, graced the scene. But above the immediate and commonplace foreground stretched the glorious chain of Alps, now in the evening sunlight melting into the opal sky; and around her window hung sprays of budding vine. These eternally lovely Alps, and the vine, and a vast expanse of heaven, would be the beauty of Margaret's window. Near to it stood her well-used easel, her old friend. Her paint-box, her brushes, and her palette, lay upon a low stool beside it. Two copies by Margaret from landscapes, made in the Dresden gallery, and especial favour-

rites of hers, hung upon the wall opposite the window. These pictures, together with a lovely bouquet of Alpine early spring flowers, which were arranged in a quaint green bottle standing upon a bracket between the pictures, had arrived this morning for Margaret ; sent, said the message delivered by a man to old Pfau, poor Margaret's regular attendant, "by an unknown friend." Margaret felt in a dream seeing these dear old friends returned,—they which the Hofrath had sold to — and —, the Munich picture-dealers !—"It must be the Hofrath or Ludmilla who had repurchased them," she instantly imagined ; and touched to the very heart by their thoughtfulness, and yet pained to imagine their spending money upon her when money could so ill be spared by either of them, she had gone forth instantly to thank them. But their surprise and delight at hearing of the pleasant return of the old favourites, and of the lovely flowers, were so genuine, and their denial of any knowledge of them so earnest, that Margaret had to puzzle her brain to discover the kind unknown friend in some other quarter. Strange that her thoughts should never have turned to poor Xavier, who, to calm his restless brain and heart, had made a visit to the mountains, and whilst gathering these delicate flowers had thought of the two lovely landscapes he had seen in Margaret's studio some months before, and determined that they, as well as the flowers, should cheer the beloved friend of his soul in her desolation.

Well, Margaret had been very busy all day arranging her working-room ; for, upon her return from the Hofrath's, she found that her kind acquaintance the gendarme, being that day off duty, had brought in a truck all her artistic effects, which, during the great confusion of the sale in the Frühlings Strasse, had been stored away at the gendarme's little house as at a place of safety. He and Ernest had constituted themselves guardians and humble servants of the "kind lady and clever artist." The father had begged as an especial favour that he might take charge of her easel and artistic goods and chattels, he had "such a respect for them." Little Ernest had besought permission, when she was again settled to work, to come to her between school-hours for a little time, and wash her brushes, clean up her palette, or do anything of that description ; he liked, he said,

handling paint-brushes so much,—that is, that he might privately before cleaning them daub red and yellow warriors upon his own hands and her easel. Margaret accepted his services; however, on condition that Ernest, each time that he came, should have a regular drawing lesson. And thus a most extraordinarily pleasant interchange of good offices commenced between the three.

Ernest had accompanied his father with the truck, and all three had been as busy as bees arranging things to the best advantage and in the most comfortable manner. Very spare of furniture, certainly, the room was, and that furniture was of the commonest description; and as spare of furniture was Margaret's little bed-room adjoining; but to Margaret that mattered nothing: she was in a stern, severe mood of mind,—commencing a severe, stern struggle. The beauty of the painting-room must be that which would proceed out of her own soul, and must be created by her own hand. Her tools remained to her,—her few books, out of which she would drink draughts of strength and peace. A bitter past was behind her,—a laborious, anxious present was around her,—and a future? She permitted herself to contemplate *no* future,—the present, the stern present, was all that must concern her. Work, work, work, her greatest friend; her consolation, the absorbing necessity of the moment, which would deaden all the anguish of a yearning heart after love, and smarting from cruel injustice! How often has the human soul to bless God for the curse pronounced upon man, "Thou shalt earn thy bread through the sweat of thy brow!" Forth from the soul are crushed the rarest wine and the purest oil by the trampling foot of Necessity! So mused our heroine, as, the good gendarme and little Ernest having taken their leave, she leant out of her window and watched the roseate light of evening fade away from the distant Alpine range till its jagged peaks became cold and grey against the twilight sky; and, as she thus mused, her husband's touching epistle was put into her hands by old Pfau.

"Ah, Conrad, that I could but believe the strange words of this letter,—that I could believe you miserable, ashamed, suffering!—then would there be hope both for you and for me! *then* would there be a future! As it is, my faith fades

away from around your image as the evening light has faded away from the mountains yonder. Those mountains in very truth are cold and cruelly savage; it was but the reflection of a warm loving sun upon you which made you so magically beautiful and dear to my eyes. Alas, as my loving faith fades, so cold and cruel does your image, oh, Conrad! arise before me. Woe, both for you and for me, that there is shaken, fading faith!"—And with a cold, trembling hand, Margaret placed the letter within a small locked box upon her table, which contained a terrible heap of bills and other painful documents.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HURRICANE OF LIFE WHICH OUR ARTIST HAD NOT IMAGINED.

IT is now late autumn. Margaret has firmly adhered to her stern path of laborious duty. Picture after picture has been finished—copy after copy made—the designs for King Ludwig are all but completed, as are also all but completed the copies of Xavier's pictures. Debt after debt has been liquidated—Margaret begins to breathe freer. It has been a severe struggle—nights as well as days have often been devoted to her work,—the early mornings, the late long summer evenings, have still found her at her easel! An extraordinary rapidity of hand has become her reward, as well as a certain dull peace of mind—a sort of frenzy of work has often beset her, so that sleeping, her dreams, rather delirium than common dreams, have been busied incessantly with painting; her brain has bewildered itself with tracing out folds and folds of drapery, which, merged with insane perplexity into horribly long lists of figures, which she was vainly striving to reduce to order, and which yet were still folds of drapery as well as figures, and *could* only be reduced to order by painting the folds exactly—oh, how painfully exactly! Or it was foliage which her eye and hand strove to fix upon the canvas, at the same time that it was Conrad's arm she sought to grasp, and his eyes she sought to look into, with such tears of the soul bedewing her own hands; yet it was only common dew, though tears at the same time, which sparkled upon the minute, intricate foliage: and then the foliage parted, and she saw a transfigured image!—The image, conjured by her imagination and over-loving heart, of the fascinating Baron!—the old, the beloved, the trusted, respected, admired husband! And the figure was so beautiful and sad, and it spoke, saying, “This, this, Margaret, is the truth—this, this is my soul!” And her own soul stood beside the transfigured image, weeping bitter tears, and pressing the beloved head of the sorrowing spirit to her bosom! And then she would wake

with a cry of anguish, and with unutterable longing thrilling her every nerve of brain and heart after the transfigured image : and the red light of morning would be cast upon the ceiling, and the sparrows would be chirping outside her casement, and the early sounds of the industrious blacksmith's hammer would strike familiarly upon her ear, and she would hastily rise and commence her painting in a hurried toilet, and with her hands trembling from the remembrances of her dream, and her eyelids heavy with sleep, and with tears shed in the dream.

But such visions only belonged to the nights. By day she was calm, and absorbed in her occupation. The excitement of clearing away the difficulties around her was of a kind really congenial with her nature. The independence she enjoyed was really delicious to her ; the stern resolves within her rendered even many a privation almost agreeable. Thus Margaret might, at times, be called happy, as human life goes ! Yes, so long as she felt herself achieving her object, she was really happy :—she would not acknowledge to herself a pain, however, that was, at times, gnawing at her heart with a deadly anguish. “It is only over-fatigue, this faint sickness that comes over me,” she would say to herself; but she did not believe this : she knew it was a cry after the fascinating Baron.

Month after month thus rolled on. Ludmilla, the Hofrath, Xavier, and the gendarme and little Ernest, were her external world. Each, in their way, rendered her life more full of interest—each, daily, became more necessary and dear to her—each had proved to her, in bitter time of need, real devotion, real regard. Her heart was sick of mere words of kindness; it recognised actions of kindness as real angels' gifts. Of all the “nine days' wonder” caused by the Baron von Ehrenberg's disappearance, and the breaking up of their home, Margaret neither knew nor cared. Neither did she hear anything of all the scandal which Xavier's constant visits to her studio occasioned.

Ludmilla, however, did ; though she despised all the gossip of the *Frau Majorin* and of the Court lady, and their compeers, and had she only heard of Xavier's devotion from such, she would not have paid the slightest attention ; but she herself had become very uneasy about it. It required no such occult sense as Ludmilla possessed to have divined

poor Xavier's secret, if you but once had witnessed him in the presence of Margaret: and Ludmilla had seen him for hours and hours hanging over her chair, as she painted, or had watched him as he read or sang to them, as he often did, in the evenings when she and Xavier looked in to cheer their solitary friend, and divert her mind from her absorbing work. Ludmilla knew, as all Munich, that Xavier had taken lodgings in a street near to Margaret's studio: the plea being, that he must be near Herr N——, the celebrated artist, whom he had persuaded to furnish him with a series of exquisite designs for goblets and ewers in gold and silver, which he was anxious to have executed for his business, and the designs for which it was absolutely necessary for him to inspect almost daily. . But the world of Munich began to whisper that the designs which brought the rich goldsmith from Augsburg to Munich were not designs for goblets and ewers, but designs upon a married lady's heart! Ah, Baron von Ehrenberg! where was your love, so often boasted of? thus leaving your wife exposed, if not to a real danger,—thanks to her nobility of soul, and her true, though foolish love of you,—at least to the disgust and scorn of a gossiping city!

Ludmilla grew dreadfully uneasy. Once she had even ventured vaguely to hint at a possibility of Xavier's state of mind to Margaret; but Margaret had sternly silenced her, and indignantly resented any such reflection upon "her tried, her noble-minded friend," as she called Xavier; and bitterly had she reproached Ludmilla with unworthy imaginings; "as though," said Margaret, rising suddenly from her easel and confronting Ludmilla, with a flush of pain and surprise overspreading her brow, and with eyes sparkling from the intensity of her indignation, "as though you were not purer than the ordinary run of women, and more loyal to a deceased husband, than to imagine me capable of encouraging aught but the purest friendship in the heart of this man—as though *love*, in the ordinary understanding of the word, would not be, both to Xavier and myself, a bitter injury, an insult, a dishonour. Friendship I acknowledge—a pure friendship, such as may exist between man and woman, as well as between man and man, woman and woman—a friendship honourable to both, useful to

both—a friendship where there is true purity of soul unutterably beneficial to both one and the other. No, Ludmilla, I cannot do Xavier—who throughout these sad, painful affairs has acted towards me like a very brother—such pitiful injustice. It is really, dearest Ludmilla, quite unworthy of your free unprejudiced mind such a supposition : it is unworthy of your love of me. And oh!" said Margaret, with a heart-piercing accent—"alas! alas! Ludmilla, has not love been to me a very curse and snare? Wherefore, then, should I seek to excite it again, either in another or myself, were it even lawful in the sight of God and in the sight of my own soul, which *this* love, did it exist, never, never could be? No, never again, I conjure you, dearest, best Ludmilla," said the indignant deserted wife, kissing her friend as she took up her palette to continue her work, "pain me by so unworthy, so mean a supposition."

Ludmilla was silenced, but not convinced. Margaret continued blinded by her own moral purity, and received poor Xavier's devoted love with joy and gratitude as the tribute of *friendship*. But the day arrived when her eyes were to be opened, and another chasm would yawn beneath her feet.

It was a mild, melancholy, autumnal day. She had, as we have said, begun to feel as though a time of comparative repose were arriving. Before fresh work was commenced she would take a sort of holiday, whilst the last calm sunny autumn days remained. Xavier was still in Munich—those designs for the golden goblets and ewers seemed as though they never would be completed,—and had proposed that they should take a walk together towards a certain pine wood, which lay some miles from the city, upon the plain—a wood which had long attracted Margaret, and through which, on many a wild March day, she had in imagination wandered, when the winds would be southing and sighing amidst the solemn dark branches ; or, when summer was hot and glaring in the town, she had pictured the intense coolness and stillness she should find in the pine grove, far out upon the plain ; she had smelt, in fancy, the odorous perfume from the ruddy column-like stems, which would rise around her in solemn dignity, were she only seated among them, beneath their shade, upon the dry mossy turf, strewn thickly with the sharp dead

pine leaves, till the ground seemed covered with a red-brown carpet. She had made several attempts to reach this grove, but never succeeded. Once she had lost her way attempting it ; once had been overtaken by a thunderstorm ; another time her companions had grown faint-hearted at the distance, and adjourned to a garden in a village upon the way to drink coffee, instead of discovering the long-sought-for pine wood.

It was reserved for Xavier and herself this afternoon to reach it. Their stroll was altogether delightful. Upon their road lay a little village, in the quaint churchyard of which a terrible battle had been fought upon a Christmas-day long years ago. The giant grave covering a hundred corpses of mortal foes fallen in this cruel skirmish, was pointed out in the churchyard by Xavier to Margaret. Dank grass and broken autumnal flowers covered it ; gorgeously tinted autumn leaves strewed it ; and an old feeble peasant-woman in her costume, brilliant as the leaves of autumn, knelt before the grave, praying with trembling withered hands and silently moving lips for the souls of the dead beneath, whose mortal remains had long ago crumbled into dust together silently, peacefully to reappear again to human eyes united in the loving forms of grass and tender flowers. Upon the church walls glowed the pictured apotheoses of the three heroes of the fight ; and the hoarse bell from the crazy belfry called the villagers to vespers.

Xavier told Margaret the whole history—and very full of poetry it is—of this battle in the churchyard, and of the three heroes who fell in it, and who came from one of the loveliest spots among the Bavarian Alps. And once having touched upon the Alps, Xavier, who had an intense passion for these mountains, became eloquent upon a theme as dear to Margaret almost as to himself, and related to her many wild legends connected with the mountains, and described excursions which he had made among them in search of rare alpine plants : for Xavier, we ought to have told the reader, was a great botanist, and had often regretted in his secret heart the fate which had made him a rich goldsmith instead of a scientific man, however poor, so that his life might have been devoted to researches in natural history.

And with such talk did they beguile their way, until they

suddenly found themselves standing within the pine wood. It might have fairly been an enchanted forest, so abruptly did they find themselves in its midst—so intensely silent was it—so wondrously beautiful and solemn! The sun was about to set, and dull grey clouds, which all day had shrouded the sky, now parted, and down dropped the majestic sun through a sea of gold, flushing the up-piled clouds with intensest violet, and flecking the heavens with vermillion cloudlets. The tall stems of the pine trees burnt in the sun's departing glory, as if they were golden columns of an enchanted palace; the dry pine-leaf carpet was of gold; the heavy dark foliage was dashed with fiery gold; a hush as of death was upon all. Side by side the two friends watched this glorious sunset.

Suddenly—was it a dream?—Margaret felt herself pressed with a convulsive mad grasp to Xavier's heart, and a kiss from lips glowing as the red sinking sun burnt upon her brow! A dizzy horror seized her, and she could have uttered a wild shriek, but that her throat was parched, and her lips seemed petrified. A mist overspread her eyes, and she knew not for a moment—to her it seemed ages—whether she were really awake, or this merely one of her strange delirious fancies. As she awoke to a sense of its dreadful reality, she saw, lying at her feet, the prostrate body of Xavier: his face, buried among the leaves, a fearful twitching alone betraying life in the white, clenched hands, which lay knotted above his head.

"Xavier! Xavier!" cried Margaret, kneeling beside the miserable young man, "Oh, God, what has come to you?—alas! alas! is it a horrible insanity that has beset you, my friend, my brother? Arise! let us forget all that has happened this last, few moments. It has never been! It was but a miserable madness!"

The unhappy man spoke not, however; he lay as one dead: the white hands only knotted themselves even tighter and tighter.

"Xavier! speak, speak to me!" cried Margaret, with increasing anxiety; and stretched forth her hands towards his to unfold them and assist him to rise; but as her touch encountered him his whole frame shrank together, and a deep low groan escaped his lips! He seemed to wake as from a

swoon, and rose up slowly, and leaning against one of the ruddy stems of an old pine-tree, gazed upon Margaret's horror-stricken face with a countenance white as the whitest marble. His features seemed to have suddenly become thin and sharp, and transparent; his eyes looked at her with the mournfulness of death in them, and his words were slow and clear, and yet with a dreary echo, as of a passing bell tolling the knell of a departing life's joy.

" Margaret, the curse, the miserable bitter curse, has fallen upon me, which in wretched dreams I have so long foreseen, and against which, oh God! how often have I prayed for help, how often! I, who for long years had forgot my childhood's prayer of, Father, deliver us from evil, lead us not into temptation! Margaret, my heart long knew that it loved you, worshipped you—that you were dearer to me, a thousand times, than life! Your image has for months and months risen up before me, shutting out the whole world, the whole universe,—shutting out all but God, who, through your dear image, as through a veil of glory, has shone down into my soul, and thoughts, resolves, desires for goodness, earnestness and truth in life, unknown until I knew you, Margaret, have sprung up and filled my spirit with a delicate perfume, with a freshness and a strength as of a second youth: I said so often in my heart, this love—alone calling forth goodness and purity—cannot be evil! It can alone, spoke an inward voice, be evil should she ever know it!—To serve, to watch over her, to lighten the anxieties of a miserable destiny—these sweet acts might, I believed, be permitted me as christian charities! But this horrible bitter curse, foreshadowed in many an evil dream, has fallen upon me. I have broken the charm, sacrificed my sense of honour, given you cause to hate, to fly from, to despise me! Oh, God! that it had been Thy will to make me one whose right it was, whose deepest life's joy it was, to tread the path of life with this beloved, this worshipped being, removing from beneath her dear feet the briars, the thorns, the sharp, cruel stones!" And the mournful face sank into his clasped hands and bowed itself, whilst the sun sank lower and lower down among the purple clouds.

The sun's last beams seemed to strike upon Margaret's brow and golden hair, and surround her as with a halo of

glory, while, stepping forth towards her friend, she withdrew his hands from before his face, and gazing with a sort of exalted triumph in her eyes, she said,—

“ My friend, my brother ! let us not be sad, or broken-hearted, or mistrusting of God ! This love, bitter, death-like misery, as it now seems to you, may be a means of ennobling, purifying, elevating ! Oh ! little, believe me, will it matter, in the end, whether the love be happy or not. God sends such fervent love for other purposes than that of happiness, for the purpose of giving untold strength and nobility to the spirit, which often may be attained rather by renunciation and the passing through the waters of affliction, than by possession or by the sunshine of prosperity. Oh, my brother ! let this passion of the soul, awoke within you by an object upon which you may not lavish your beautiful devotion without committing a deadly sin, and perilling the corruption of that which itself is so pure, so sacred,—let this strong ardent passion become yet stronger, yet more ardent, by being turned into a wider sphere of action than the life of one weak woman ! The poet, the painter, the musician, the philanthropist, the man of science, each, be he but true to his own calling, burns with a love of the most pure, of the most ardent nature !—In all of these, love is but a fuller development ; or rather, but another phase of that impulse of the soul which now is swaying you as the moon sways the ocean.

“ My friend,” pursued Margaret, after a moment’s pause, her eyes losing their look of triumph and swimming with tender, compassionate tears, so sad, so stolid, so utterly unresponsive remained poor Xavier’s face—so steeped in dumb self-contempt and sickness of the heart, as he lent with bowed head against the pine-tree,—“ my friend, my brother, let our lips thank God that, through His blessed Word, your straight unclouded pathway from this fatal chasm is laid down. This is no dubious question. There is so clear, so straight a path before you, when once you have snapt the insidious delusive bonds which had bound your imagination around me. Let me place upon your breast armour wherewith to fight against myself ! You have the noblest strength, believe me : and, dear friend, believe me, also, a peace, a

peace unutterable will be yours, once having conquered in this great temptation. God has permitted this fearful madness to overwhelm you, in order that, ere it is too late, your nobler self may arise, and, with scourges of keen thongs, may drive forth the evil-doers from the temple of your heart ; and then will arise the angel of peace, with healing on his wings ! Believe me, oh ! believe me, Xavier, my words may find no echo in your poor heart now ; but the echo will not be voiceless long. I would so gladly, so thankfully bind up your wounded soul, pour wine and balm into the wounds ; but, alas, the balm, as yet, from my unhappy hands might become deadliest poison ! We must part, dear friend, but let me, in times to come, have reason to thank God for the greatness, for the deep nobility of your love, instead of it filling my heart with miserable remorse for having caused you such bitter, such unprofitable pain, my poor friend ! ” Margaret ceased, and a silence as of death was upon the forest, only broken by the gentle rustle of the evening breeze among the pines.

At length a miserable moan burst from Xavier’s lips, and looking up he found that Margaret was gone ! It seemed as though she had vanished out of the forest silently, as the sunlight had done : and the absence of that dear form left all around him doubly drear. He made no attempt to follow her through the wood : he felt that the most impenetrable barrier divided her from him for ever,—the awfulness of which never had overwhelmed his soul until now, when Margaret knew his secret—until he had heard her mild, calm words, and seen her clear, truthful eyes looking into his with an expression of celestial faith in the dispensations of God, and also in the nobility of his own nature. Never had he so loved her as in that burning, agonized hour—never had life, without her beloved presence, seemed so worthless, so bare—never had the “angel of peace with healing on his wings” seemed so far, far distant ! But Xavier felt a reverence for Margaret as of a very saint, and strove, with all the energy of his being, to regain the path leading him forth, as she would have him, from temptation. He wrestled all that livelong night with his tumultuous heart, the pine-branches tossing wildly above his head, and a cold moon

riding calmly through a cloudy sky, ever and anon shedding pale gushes of brilliancy down through the dark, tossing branches. And often, man, in wrestling with his heart's voice, discovers in the morning that, like Jacob, it is with an angel he has wrestled.

Had Margaret seen the chastened tender expression about poor Xavier's mouth and upon his brow, as he sat in a little wayside inn next morning, upon a road leading to the mountains whither he was bending his sad steps, her spirit would have been more strangely troubled by thoughts of her unhappy friend than it even was, as she sat, with weary, sleepless eyes, and trembling hand, putting the last touches to the two copies of Xavier's pictures.

Margaret would have left Munich immediately—instantly, could she only have dispensed with that embarrassing thing her passport, or instantly have put all her few affairs into order: but all that must be done should be done most rapidly: Ludmilla, even, must never know the reason of her sudden departure,—she would surmise, perhaps, but must rest satisfied, dear, true heart! with a poor plea for her departure,—that Margaret had stringent reasons to return to England.

Ludmilla and the Hofrath were thunderstruck with amaze, when Margaret, the evening of the day following the scene in the pine-wood, called upon them to announce her departure for England the next day at noon. They were extraordinarily distressed, and as kind as Margaret had ever, in the hour of trial, found them; but realise Margaret's departure they could not;—no, not even when they had seen Margaret borne swiftly away from before their eyes by the relentless power of steam, and had also seen all her small worldly possessions consigned into the luggage-van directed—

“ Frau von Ehrenberg,
“ Passagier nach
“ England.”

It was only when Ludmilla stood solitary in the deserted abode which, but a few hours ago, had been the home of her beloved friend, amid the litter of papers, straw, ends of pack-thread, and the nameless chaos which ever fills a room after

a departure for a long journey—when she took possession of a list, in Margaret's beloved hand-writing, of a variety of little commissions which she had entrusted to her care, and saw the walls divested of all their familiar sketches and traces of her friend's hand, and when she glanced towards the window, and saw no longer the easel, the old paint-box, and palette—that she first felt that she was gone !

CHAPTER IX.

A RAPID JOURNEY, AND AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER.

OUR heroine, throughout her long journey, seemed impelled by a restless demon to travel day and night, night and day, unceasingly. The more rapid the motion, the more it seemed to ease the misery within her. She sought to occupy her thoughts with all around her: now her eyes drank in the orange sunset, which gleamed across the desolate moorland over which the train was gliding swiftly: a tall crucifix rises gauntly against the flood of orange-light, now deepening and deepening into vermillion; and the moorland, the crucifix, and distant trees turning into inky blackness. Now it is night: the carriage sways to and fro: she is all solitary, except for an old man at the further corner, whose monotonous snorings rise at intervals above the rattle of the carriages. Margaret's head sinks upon her breast—sleep visits at last her weary, fevered eyelids; but it is Xavier's voice that murmurs in her dream—it is the rush of pine-trees that is around her—it is a burning kiss that is imprinted upon her forehead: her eyes start open in wild amaze; she seems still to hear his voice, so sad and broken: she feels her brow flushed with fevered blood, which burns and careers like fiery poison through her veins. The dark train rattles and sways, and sways and rattles, through the blackness of night, when the steam-whistle screeches madly through the echoing tunnel which they now enter. She could have wildly joined in its infernal scream: she felt a terrible something at her heart, which gnawed at times with a tooth so cruel that her very life surely must fall its prey. Tears in the darkness dropped and dropped from beneath the hot, swollen eyelids, and over the compressed lips. "Oh, Conrad, my husband! that I could have laid my brow, where this burning spot eats into the very brain, upon thy heart—that its haunting miserable memory could vanish in the knowledge that thy heart contained a love deeper, stronger, purer than this sad love that has unfolded itself

before me ! My soul feels a craving, like a very craving after life, for a love in thy heart, deep, earnest, boundless—such a love as I feel within my own soul. Oh, Conrad ! to save myself from utter misery this boundless love must tend itself all towards my art—my dear, dear art ! My words to that poor soul must become deeds of struggling life."

But, if ever Margaret sank into a fevered sleep that night or any of the several following nights and days of her journey, it was Xavier's voice that murmured in her ears, Xavier's presence that filled her imagination,—now as himself,—now strange and bewildering in the guise of the fascinating Baron.

In the dark early dawn, in the broad light of noon, Margaret busied herself with painful endeavours to arrange in her mind her plans for the future, for her life in London during the approaching winter ; and then, also, she strove to keep—oh, how contrary to her endeavours of these many months past !—the image of the Baron in her thoughts. She called up the old picture of her husband as she had first believed him to be,—the loving, the devoted. She lived over many a past day and hour when he had appeared to her in his old, beloved form. How calm, how delicious, did she imagine her life then ! She also tried to conceive pictures, and lay out fresh quantities of work to be wrought out in days to come,—a most common amusement of hers ; but all seemed flat and weariful ; her mind had exhausted itself by those last many months of intense labour and drudgery, or it is possible, also, that the powers of her imagination might have been so utterly absorbed by those strange events just passed, of a terrible reality, that no imaginative powers remained over for mere idealism. Truly did Margaret at this juncture experience how blessed her lot was in one respect above the ordinary lot of women,—she first perceived how terrible a curse her gifts of imagination would have been to her, as to many another of her sisters, but for a channel discovered for its free career under ordinary circumstances, in her profession : now that unchecked this subtle power was turned upon her personal life it had become the veriest demon, besetting her with a thousand horrors, repeating, exaggerating words in its silent voice, mirroring looks and actions in its magic glass, and with a few

touches completing, with marvellous rapidity, picture after picture of misery or joy,—till Margaret, spite of her earnest prayers after purity of soul, felt, with intensest horror, at times almost as though she had been branded with a mark of sin.

And thus she pursued her journey: now swept across the country with the power of steam—now painfully jolting up hill and dale through dreary wastes, for weary, weary hours in the uncomfortable imprisonment of a German *stell-wagen*, an omnibus of antediluvian quaintness—now sailing down the quiet green Neckar and the rushing Rhine—now speeding again by train among the pleasant pastoral scenes of Belgium, and her miserable thoughts broken in upon by the care of luggage, the anxieties about bills, the changing of conveyance, and the importunity of porters;—and now she is in Calais.

Both on account of the smallness of her finances, and also because impelled by her own restless state of mind, she longed for rapid motion. She had travelled, as we have said, night and day, and arriving in Calais about twelve o'clock on the Saturday night, expected to find a packet starting immediately for England; but, like many another traveller, much against her will she was detained the whole of the Sunday in that dirty little port, until the departure of the mail in the evening.

Margaret, exhausted by her hurried journey, and the fearful excitement she had passed, slept an unbroken sleep for many hours, not waking till the broad light of noon-day flooded her chamber. Then, much refreshed and singularly calmed in mind, she arose, and having breakfasted, strolled forth to amuse herself with sauntering about the little town, and observing the picturesque groups of girls and women in their snowy caps, heavy golden earrings, and rich orange, blue, green, and scarlet petticoats and jerkins, seated chatting upon the threshold of houses squalid and frightful in their commonplaceness as any houses in Bethnal Green or Whitechapel; and, what struck Margaret's eye especially, coming from amid the quaint domestic architecture of Germany, houses of such a strikingly common *English* air. She had wandered out of the little town, having dived into various alleys and courts to delight her eyes with their gay pictu-

resque groups, and was walking along the jetty drinking in the fresh sea-air, and, as she saw the calm blue expanse stretching out before her, began to feel her heart throb with a real pleasure, saying to herself, "Home, home, after all, lies across this expanse of water!" A sudden longing after England seized her, and she became more than ever impatient for the evening, when she should be fairly approaching the cliffs of Dover.

The quays and jetty of Calais were thronged with gay people enjoying the bright Sunday afternoon, and Margaret was startled several times by hearing her own language spoken by groups of ladies and gentlemen who passed her as she stood solitarily leaning over the balustrades of the pier.

Now an English voice—how could it be so familiar to her?—said close to her ear, as two gentlemen sauntered by, "Well, Baron, I reckon yonder's our little steamer lying out by the jetty there, all right and tight, and a quick sailer, I hope, for your sake, eh, Baron?"

"Hope so, dear friend. I quite me feel incapacitate to voyage in long-sailing vessel: in faith! I no love the salty sea air; it makes me feel—how say you it in English?—it goes me round like a mill-wheel in my stomach! I quite sea-sick already—*Mein Gott! Ja!*"

"Ha, ha ha!" laughed the unsympathising voice of the companion: "But then, it is to reach England you endure this sickness, you know—England you so adore—the native home of your clever wife, Baron. How the deuce she don't make up her mind to accompany you, I can't fathom!" pursued the same voice, which Margaret had already recognised as that of Mr. Fleming. And the other? It needed not for Margaret to have turned her head, when the speakers had passed, to recognise in the other the fascinating Baron! There he stood, leaning also over the pier, at a few yards distant from her, Mr. Fleming pointing out to him the little steamer which that evening was to depart, and by which she also was to have taken her passage—most strange coincidence! There stood the Baron, sleek and handsome as ever; yet some way how different to the image she had been cherishing of him during her journey, when her *ideal* of him had been called forth as a guardian angel against the phan-

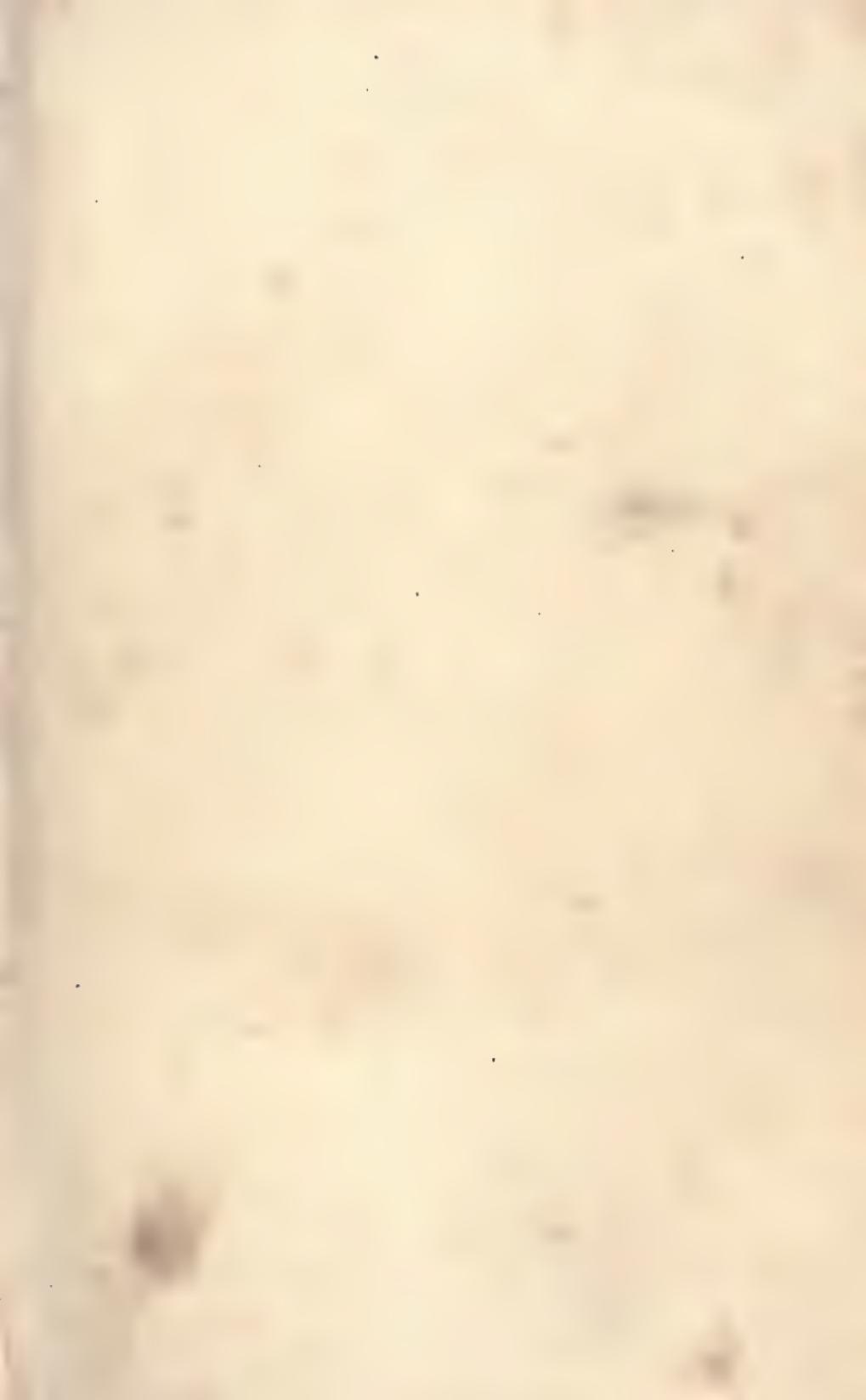
toms of her fevered brain. He looked so completely the man of the world ; his clothes were of the very best—how different to poor Margaret's worn cloak and gown, and old last winter's bonnet ! As he raised his gold eye-glass to inspect the little steamer, a diamond ring caught a ray of sunshine, and flashed, dazzling Margaret's eyes.

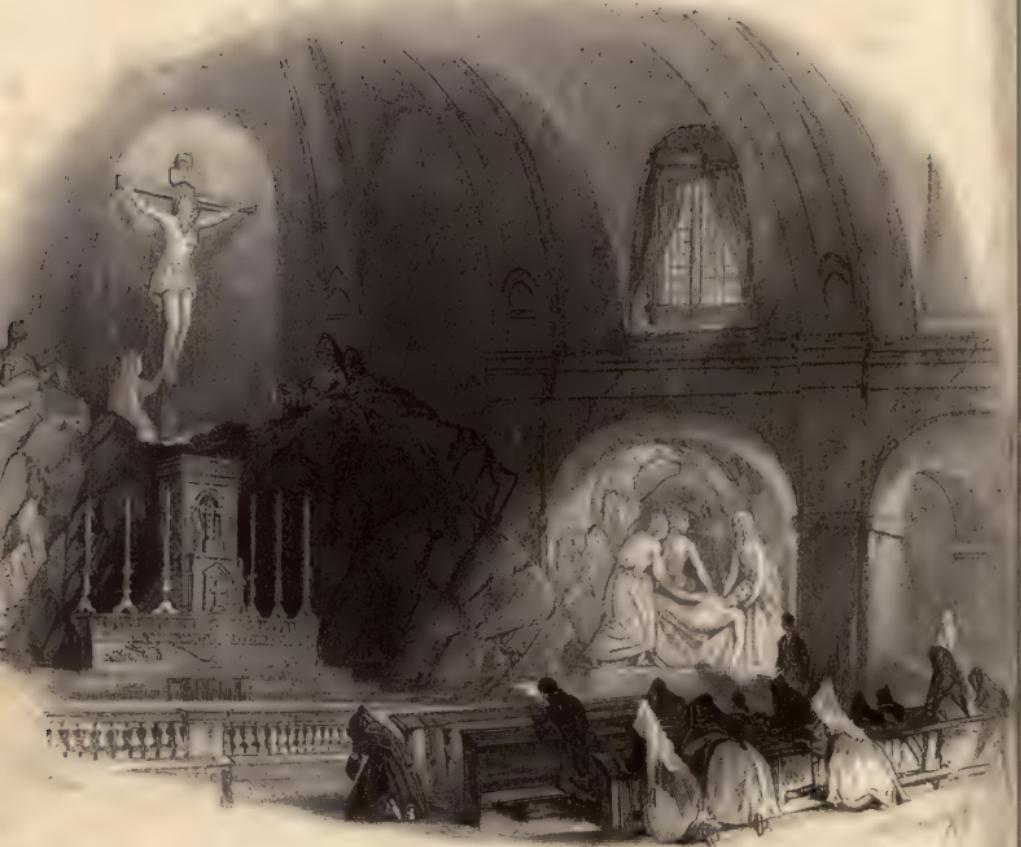
CHAPTER X.

COMMENCEMENT OF LIFE IN PARIS ; SHADOW OF DEATH IN THE SYRIAN DESERT ; AN HONOURED GUEST AT FLIMBSTD.

MARGARET is in Paris. The sudden vision of the fascinating Baron so worked upon our poor heroine, that as soon as a trembling of her whole frame, which seized her upon recognising her husband in company with Mr. Fleming, had passed, she hastened with rapid steps and an indignant heart, the diamond ring flashing all the way before her mental eye, back to her inn, and from thence hastening to the railway, had departed by the very next train leaving for Paris.

That sleek, comfortable, *degagé* air of the Baron ; his elegant eye-glass ; his fashionable, warm great coat, and above all his diamond ring, so fraught with powerful memories to poor Margaret, haunted her with a maddening vividness, as she rushed on at headlong speed towards the great city where she had no friends, no especial object, but where at least she should conceal herself from her husband, and from Xavier, where she could be solitary in the midst of a multitude. England was no longer a home for her. She saw with a sickening distinctness how the charming Baron would accompany his friend Fleming down to his home, and to the neighbourhood endeared to her by so many memories. She heard his broken English, someway now so exciting to her nerves, spoken with his elegant bows and sweet smiles in the old halls of Flimbsted ; she saw Mrs. Lushington, always prepossessed in his favour we must remember, and Mistress Dorothy fairly enamoured of him ; she saw the fêtes in his honour ; she heard the rolling to and fro of carriages along the smooth gravel roads of the park ; she saw him a star of the first magnitude down in that quiet steepy hollow ; she saw and heard all this, and much more, in her indignation, and fairly ground her teeth in bitter disgust. "Miserable, miserable, humbug !" murmured she ; "yet, why should I in-





Altar of St. Roch.

dignantly chafe at this knowledge : I who, more than any one else, have had my eyes bandaged and befooled by this man's tongue. I ought, perhaps, as a loving wife, to rejoice that he should be feted, caressed—that he should at least appear to the world, if not to me, noble and true. But I'm sick of shows. That ring, that last letter of his, and his present appearance, what a history they unfold ! God forgive me if my disgust is too violent—too indignant.

But this fresh excitement of mind produced one beneficial effect ; it dispersed all sentimental memories of poor Xavier. She was aroused to action and reality by many things. Life in Paris was new to her. It was some little time before she felt herself at home. She had also to set to work without more ado to gain money for her subsistence, for she arrived in this great rich capital with but about one hundred francs, her very meagre wardrobe, her easel and paint-box, and the two copies from the Dresden Gallery, sent back to her, as the reader may remember, by Xavier. Lessons she gave in drawing, and German, to an English family who lived in the same house with her. Her two copies from the Dresden gallery she disposed of, and so managed to keep herself afloat at first, until she had completed a copy of that beautiful though quaint picture of Fra Angelico's in the Louvre, "The Coronation of the Virgin," for which she had obtained a commission from a London picture-dealer. It was hard work this commencement of her Paris sojourn ; but she had so long struggled and battled along the road of life that it was no small difficulty that daunted her. She again became absorbed in her painting, if anything with a two-fold enthusiasm. The Louvre was a temple of holy repose to her ; it, and the beautiful church of St. Roch, were all Paris to her. She knew scarcely any one, but lived solely for her painting, and as her evenings, except such hours as were devoted to instructing the children of the English family we have mentioned, were employed in completing the two designs yet remaining of the series for King Ludwig, her time was most fully occupied.

It was Christmas morning, and Margaret arose with the prospect of eating a regular English dinner that evening of roast-beef and plum-pudding with the family of her pupils. She felt in a comfortable, placid enough state of mind, and was

intending to beguile the morning with a lazy rest upon her sofa, reading Lamartine's *Girondins*, a book which had seized considerably upon her imagination, when a thick letter arrived from Munich. A kind of misgiving somehow crept over her as she broke the seal,—such a strange atmosphere surrounds certain letters. There was a short letter from Ludmilla, full of affectionate enquiries after Margaret, and with a postscript which, when we have spoken of one of the two letters which Ludmilla's letter enclosed, we will extract for the benefit of our reader. The other two letters Margaret instantly recognised as being, one from Lushington, the other from her old correspondent, Mrs. Dorothea. Especially distrusting the epistle penned by Mrs. Dorothea's stiff little hand, she broke open Lushington's, to find it a long diary of his glorious eastern wandering. Much of it read like scenes from the Arabian Nights, so fantastic, glowing, and truly oriental. The diary had been penned for her and Ludmilla's reading, it said, on Mount Carmel, in the desert near Tyre and Sidon, in Damascus, at Nazareth, at Jerusalem, at Bethlehem, upon the banks of the Jordan. The journey had been a wonderful realization of the dreams of his youth, wrote Lushington, and though not without certain danger, a harvest of the richest memories. Margaret glanced over the greater portion of the closely written chronicle of her cousin's wanderings hastily, spite of the beautiful and strange things it contained, to see how it was with the dear writer at the time his letter had been dispatched. It was from Alexandria he had last written, and for weeks there seemed to have been a pause in the chronicle. He had been ill—ill to death, of the Syrian fever. The last lines of the letter were traced with a hand so trembling and light, that the words looked as if written in cobweb, so slight, so wavering, were the lines. But he was better; was going to live many years yet, he trusted. He had had strange experiences of life in the desert to the sick, to the dying man; of what the full miseries of quarantine laws are, whilst lying within the walls of the Alexandrian Lazaretto. Many extraordinary experiences he had had, but the most singular thing of all, perhaps, was a dream, a vision, whichever you choose to call it, when at the very crisis of his fever. It was in the desert. His companions

had all fled from him, with the exception of his Dragoman. How long he had lain in his suffering he knew not, but a golden light appeared to fill the tent, and in the centre of this light stood Ludmilla, gazing at him with the expression of a transfigured saint. In her hand she held a strange vessel of burnt clay. "Give unto him to drink, my best beloved Ludmilla, let him drink and live," whispered a spirit voice ; and Ludmilla, placing the earthen cup in the hands of a shrouded form which suddenly appeared beside her, the golden light and Ludmilla gradually faded and faded to the sound of strange fantastic music, and opening his eyes, Lushington had seen kneeling before him, illuminated by the red sun just risen above the purple horizon line of desert, the identical shrouded figure of the dream, with the self-same earthen cup in his hands ; and wild music, slow and mournful, was sounding around the tent. It was an Arab doctor, who, amid strange incantations, was administering a healing draught. Lushington wrote, that from that moment life seemed, by slow pulsations, to return to him, and that although feeble as an infant, and faded to a ghost, he felt once more a hold upon life within him. Gradually he would retrace his way back to England. The hand-writing of the envelope showed much stronger than the last words of the letter. From this little circumstance Margaret gathered hope and comfort.

How yet more strange would have seemed Lushington's dream to him, could he only have read the words of Ludmilla's postscript. It ran thus :—

"I some way imagine, dearest Margaret, that one of these two letters is from Mr. Lushington :—how anxious I am to hear its contents you may suppose, when I tell you—do not laugh now at my relation of visions and dreams, as you usually do—that a few weeks past I suddenly was startled by hearing in my sleep, about daybreak, the voice of a dearly beloved one, who, as I have often assured you, guards and directs me in any event of life of more than ordinary import. The dear voice said, 'Arise, Ludmilla ! one very dear to us all is sick unto death.' And it seemed to me, Margaret, that I obeyed the voice, and standing suddenly within a tent pitched in the desert, saw Mr. Lushington stretched like a corpse upon a

heap of cloaks. Again I heard the dear voice saying, ‘ Give unto him to drink, my best beloved Ludmilla; let him drink and live.’ And I found in my hand a strangely shaped vessel of burnt clay, from which proceeded a fresh, pungent odour. A dark figure, his head shrouded in white hood-like drapery, now stood beside me, whilst wild mournful music sounded without the tent. Into the hands of this figure I felt I must consign the strange vessel of clay, and as I did so, the form of our dear friend gradually faded away,—the tent, the desert, the shrouded figure, and the wild music; but it seemed to me that a roseate light, like a reflection of the up-rising sun, flickered over his sharp pallid features, and that he stirred like one waking out of a deep slumber. This dream for days haunted me with a strange vividness. Write to me, dearest Margaret, immediately upon the receipt of these letters, and let me hear how it is with Mr. Lushington. Once more adieu.

“ LUDMILLA.”

Margaret could not, indeed, laugh at this strange coincidence, but she was still too anxious by far about Mrs. Dorothea’s letter at the present moment to ponder and speculate upon the singularity of this double dream, as at another time she would have done. She walked several times up and down the room before she could summon courage to open the second letter, but at length she did, in a sort of mechanical manner, looking out at the window, and then reading the carefully written date and address very slowly, as if spelling out each familiar word.

The letter was considerably long, and written, as was usual with her old correspondent, at various times. We will only give those passages from the epistle which particularly affected our heroine.

“ It was, as my dear young friend may suppose, a great surprise, and caused no little flurry in Mrs. Lushington,—who, by the way, this summer, seems, I regret to write it, to have become more than usually nervous, and even somewhat feeble,—when our neighbour, Mr. Fleming, called one morning about luncheon-time, accompanied by a tall, handsome, foreign-looking gentleman: who the gentleman was, my dear friend has long since guessed. Wilmot ushered them into the dining-room: we were sitting in your great-

aunt's dressing-room, and had seen them alight out of Mr. Fleming's dog-cart, and pass into the hall, and soon Wilmot brought their cards, one of which, as soon as your aunt had seen it,—a very pretty card to my mind it is, with its coronet and simple name, my dear,—she went all into a tremble, and giving a little scream, I thought would have gone off into hysterics. ‘It is, only think, Dolly,’ said she, ‘the husband of poor Isabella’s child, the German baron’; and then she went quite red all of a sudden, and said, ‘Give me some spirits of lavender! quick, Dolly, and lend me your arm: we must not keep him waiting, Dolly: and Dolly,’ said she, as we descended the stairs, ‘I trust that silly child has not married a man who cannot speak English.’ * * *

“The Baron, as I have already described, has long since become quite a member of our little family; he has won all our hearts by his amiable manners and great accomplishments. Your aunt has long since ceased to wonder at your marrying a foreigner, when he is such a one as Baron von Ehrenberg. She says to me in private that she is thankful to heaven for such a happy lot having fallen upon you. I felt, I must confess, rather displeased with the Baron. You will, my dear young friend, pardon my freedom in saying this, but you remember Dolly was always a candid speaker. I felt, I say, a bit of displeasure against Baron von Ehrenberg for not having brought you with him, but as he said to me, with his very sweet smile and graceful manner, ‘that I must quarrel with you about that, and not with him, and that no pleasure he enjoys here is half a pleasure unaccompanied as he is by you, and as he assures me that your pleasure in his letters detailing all the small news of our doings will be extreme, I must pardon him. But also I have felt a little vexed with you, my dear; and that is, because you have never written to him all the time he has been here. He appears much to desire tidings from you, but with the extremest sweetness will permit no reflections to be cast upon you. ‘She is so very much occupied with her painting,’ he says, ‘that he never expects often to hear of you.’ I hardly, however, think this kind of you, my dear.” *

“November 18th.—Our dear Baron is still with us; we are always afraid of his taking his departure. Your aunt seems to have grown quite young again since the dear

Baron, the 'fascinating Baron,' as Mrs. Fleming and the Miss Masseys have called him—don't, my dear, be jealous—has been at Flimbsted. We have had such gaiety as these old walls have never before seen, perhaps. The Baron has introduced charades, and acted proverbs, and many extraordinary dances ; he is the life of our little social assemblies. Mrs. Lushington is quite enthusiastic about the Baron's music and singing. My dear, you have not written us half praises enough of your fascinating husband. But I fear all these pleasant and gay evenings will soon be at an end ; the dear Baron says he *must* really leave us. You, my dear, will greatly delight, I doubt not, at this news. Mrs. Lushington, who is sitting beside me, bids me say that she has had the pleasure of placing in your husband's hands for you, as a small token of her affection, a cheque for £100. She felt a little embarrassment about doing this ; but the dear Baron, with his charming candour, kissing your aunt's hand—a piece of politeness in the foreign manners of your dear husband much to Mrs. Lushington's taste, as it reminds her of the fine manners of the gentlemen in her youthful days—well, my dear, I was going to observe, that, kissing your aunt's hand with his inimitable grace, he observed with his charming candour, that though you *were* now a German baroness, your German nobility in wealth, though not in rank, was considerably inferior to your English nobility, and that, knowing well the depth of his dear wife's funds, he could answer with perfect heartfelt pleasure that the token of affection would in every way be most acceptable."

* * * * *

" Our delightful guest is now gone upon a short tour with Mr. Fleming into Wales and Scotland. It is, unluckily, not quite the season for a foreigner to see these lovely countries to advantage ; but still the Baron seemed bent upon the little tour, saying he knew not when again he might have an opportunity. But he has agreed to spend Christmas with us, and so, my dear, you may imagine the old house full of unaccustomed mirth. The dear Baron professes himself delighted with England ; but this, and doubtless all particulars of his sojourn among us, you will be well acquainted with. Fox-hunting with Mr. Fleming has been an extraordinary excitement to your dear husband ; but we

have been in extreme terror, your aunt and I, each time that he has gone out with the hounds, fearing broken bones or necks. But your dear husband seems a rich nature, which can enjoy all manner of things: the sweets of song and music—the reading of even the eminent divines, so dear to your aunt—the mazy dance—the beauteous forms of nature, and the excitement of the chase. Your aunt is as anxiously expecting his return as though she were a young girl in love. She has determined, upon his return, to accompany him to all the little fêtes given in his honour, at the Flemings', Masseys', and other neighbours; and, in order to do this in perfect ease, has had the old family coach fresh lined and cushioned, and purchased a new fur-lined cloak and a black satin hood. On Christmas-day all dine here. We wish we could only have you, my dear, among us; but you must imagine the grand doings: the dinner is to be at seven, at which all the family plate is to figure, and Wilmot and his underlings in new liveries. We are beginning to anticipate the return of Mr. Herbert: perhaps he also may join in our Christmas party; that would be charming for him to make the acquaintance of the Baron."

* * * * *

At seven o'clock on Christmas-day, when doubtless the fascinating Baron was receiving all the incense of Flimbsted flattery, and when Margaret ought to have been partaking of the good turkey, roast-beef, and plum-pudding of her English acquaintance in her Parisian home, she was lying upon her sofa, her eyes shaded from all light, and a cloth soaked in eau-de-cologne upon her burning forehead. It was lucky for poor Margaret that a violent headache she could with truth plead as her excuse for not eating the good English dinner, heartache being an excuse never imagined or accepted in "polite circles."

CHAPTER XI.

DEATH AT THE BARRICADES ; A STREAK OF DAWN.

SICKNESS of heart, disgust at falseness, contempt and anger, all gradually are brushed away by the wings of Time. Margaret avoided all remembrance of her husband ; and no more tidings, either of him or of poor Lushington, had reached her. To Lushington she would so gladly have written, addressing a letter to him at Flimbsted ; but how could she direct there, when no letter of hers had even been seen to arrive there for her husband ? No, as in many another time, she strove "in patience to possess her soul." The quiet of her art-life had brought, at length, peace with it, and she was living in the pleasant prospect of a visit in the spring from her dear Ludmilla. In the same letter which had announced this pleasant news, were these words also,—

"The other day, our old friend Mr. Xavier called upon us. We had wondered rather how it was that we had seen and heard nothing of him for so long a time : but he has been ill; it seems : he looked very thin and pale ; but there was something about him more agreeable than usual, to my eyes : his countenance, in its emaciation, and with those large, clear, brown eyes of his, reminded me quite startlingly of the head of St. John in that wonderful little picture by our favourite Memling, in the Pinakothek. He brought us a very beautiful collection of dried Alpine plants to show us, and some really lovely drawings he had been making of leaves and flowers from nature. He surprised us all greatly by saying that he was seriously thinking of devoting himself to botanical research, and of visiting, for this purpose, the Tropics : he seems really in serious earnest about this, and has been preparing himself in various ways —by attending botanical lectures at the University, by studying careful drawings of plants, under the guidance of his friend N—— ; and, also, as it is especially with reference to studying the medicinal qualities of plants that



Birth of the Parrotade



he intends visiting the Tropics, certain courses of medical lectures. I fancy his recent illness has had a deal to do with this sudden resolve of his. Mr. Xavier told us also that, before leaving Europe, he was visiting Paris to prosecute there certain enquiries, and to endeavour to induce, if possible, a young French physician, much interested in botanical research, to accompany him. We said, of course when he was in Paris he would see you: he seemed much surprised, I thought, to hear that you were in Paris, and such a momentary embarrassment passed across his countenance that my old suspicions about the state of his heart—*pardon me, dear friend*—returned. He asked for your address: so doubtless you will see our friend; but be on your guard."

But week after week rolled by, and no Xavier presented himself,—neither did Margaret expect any such thing: she felt that the true spirit of noble action had arisen in his soul, and she thanked God for it; and a great weight seemed removed from her mind.

But Xavier had both seen and watched her daily, though unknown to her, with an anxiety and care greater by far than that with which he had once, disguised as an Indian, watched her every action at the artists' ball at Munich: this he had done for weeks, having taken lodgings in the same street as hers—determined to guard her so long as was possible during his short stay in Europe. A growing feeling, too, which he perceived everywhere in the public mind, of some approaching mighty political and social revolution, which already, spite of clear skies, growled low and terribly like distant thunder, actuated him to this line of conduct. He seemed detained, as if spell-bound, near to her still so dear to his soul.

And it was not long ere the revolution of 1848 broke suddenly over Paris and Europe with a crash of the mightiest tempest. Margaret, believing, for the first moment, that now would arrive a day of true freedom; that now all moral reforms would be wrought out with the glory of surprising miracles by a people penetrated at length by the doctrines of love and peace; that the poet Lamartine would be a legislator such as the world had never yet witnessed; and that a dawn of such resplendent glory was at hand as never

yet had beamed except in poets' souls, was carried away by an enthusiasm such as only such a nature—sanguine, poetic, and at the same time deeply religious—as hers could feel. Her own personality seemed utterly absorbed in the vast struggle going on around her ; and intense enthusiasm and faith had cast out all fear.

One evening of that eventful February, listening with throbbing heart to the sounds of the “*Marseillaise*” sung by a thousand excited voices passing along beneath her window, to the distant booming of deadly cannon, mingling with the tolling of bells and the shouts of a mad crowd watching a sudden glare of fire which gleamed up and suddenly illuminated the ceiling of her rooms with its red splendour, Margaret was startled by having a little hastily-written billet thrust into her hand by a man in a blouse, who, stained with blood and smoke, unceremoniously entered, and, saying “*Madame, Monsieur le Docteur awaits you below,*” again disappeared.

The words of the note, written in pencil and in French, ran thus :—

“*Madame la Baronne de Ehrenberg is requested immediately to accompany a friend to — Hospital to see a dying friend. Madame la Baronne need have no fear : the dying man has fought like a hero for ‘Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité.’*”

In a moment Margaret was below, where a singularly grave young Frenchman, totally unknown to her, hastily conducted her away towards the hospital by paths and by ways which were as completely strange to her as though they were in a city she had never before set foot in ; but dreadful sights and sounds met them everywhere, though all great thoroughfares were avoided by her silent guide. Margaret's soul began to grow sick, and recoil with horror against this, as she had, seated within her home, believed it, *bloodless revolution*.

“*Madame la Baronne must prepare herself to meet the face of a very dear friend : but he has fallen nobly—he has shown himself a perfect hero : ma foi ! Madame, he might have been a Frenchman !*” “*Is it—is it—Monsieur Xavier ?*” hoarsely demanded Margaret, with terrible horror creeping through her veins. “*Monsieur le Docteur* knows the name of the unfortunate gentleman.”

"No, no, Madame; it is no Monsieur Xavier! it is, Madame, a person nearer—dearer: Madame must be prepared—but he has fallen, fighting at a barricade, like a hero—like a Frenchman: upon his tomb may be engraved the words, 'Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.'"

"Lushington!" gasped Margaret, and her soul fainted within her.

"Pardon, Madame! no: no Monsieur de Lussintone. But we are just arrived: may the good God give Madame strength!"

"Oh, it is some strange mistake!" said Margaret to herself, greatly relieved as she followed her mysterious conductor up the great ghastly staircases, and along ghastly passages of the hospital, where, every now and then, some sad sight or sound encountered them, as in the street through which they had wended their miserable way.

At length they paused at a door of a little room: Margaret's heart beat wildly; it seemed as though she should be choked by its wild throbbing—as though they blinded, deafened her. At a low knock of her conductor the door slowly opened, and a Sister of Charity, with her meek face, stood there.

"Madame is come,—but too late!" and her gentle eyes swimming with tears:—"The holy God be ever blessed: He giveth comfort to the widow and to the orphan. Madame, your husband died in peace!"

It *was* Margaret's husband! Lighted by pale tapers burning around the simple bed, white as sculptured marble, with an expression of peace, of truth, such as never he had borne in life—transfigured as he had appeared in Margaret's dreams—he lay there, his hands crossed upon his breast, through the waxen fingers of which, and through pure white linen, shone an awful gleam of crimson which had oozed from the death-wound. No diamond ring now gleamed on those well known, death-stricken hands.

The agony of Margaret, the shock, was untold: the gentle Sister of Charity and the Doctor imagined hers the grief of simple affection, and endeavoured to soothe her with the words of love addressed to her absent ear by the dying man: but each word was only a still more cruel stab. Hers was a horrible remorse; for that which could, alas! have

been no otherwise, unless Margaret had possessed a love deeper than that of any mortal. But in the depths of her bitter misery her forgetfulness of him seemed a crime flagrant enough to brand her with God's curse, at that judgment throne before which now, perchance, the soul of that poor corpse was appearing. How affecting, now, to her heart appeared his miserable weaknesses, which in life had hardened her very soul against him, till at times it had seemed harder than the nether millstone. The angel of death, in this case as in so many another, was also the angel of reconciliation.

* * * * *

“ You said he spoke of me with love, with forgiveness, Sister ? ” asked Margaret’s broken voice, in the early dawn of the next day, as she stretched forth her feeble hand from the bed in her own house, whither she had been conveyed from the hospital in a swoon by the Doctor and the good Sister of Charity.

“ He spoke of Madame with tender love—he prayed for the forgiveness of Madame for many sins—he prayed that masses might be said for his soul—he prayed that Madame would see that this was done—he prayed God and the Virgin to permit him to see Madame again, if but for one moment, in this life—he prayed as a little child prays: and then, as if in delirium, addressed both *Madame* and *Madame sa mère*: much that he said was in a strange tongue. But Madame may rest assured Monsieur died in peace.”

* * * * *

A strange foreign gentleman, each day, and several times in each day, during Margaret’s illness, enquired anxiously after her from the Sister of Charity and from the Doctor, who visited her with unwearying zeal; and with the Doctor had many a long and deep discourse. At length, on the third day, ascertaining that the invalid was considerably better, and somewhat calmer in mind, spite of many head-shakings of the Doctor, he placed in the Sister’s hand a note to be delivered to Margaret in the course of the day, should she still continue calmer and better.

Margaret, after a deep sleep, upon waking, read these words, which by the Sister’s gentle hand had been laid upon her pillow during her sleep —

" All care regarding the interment of Monsieur le Baron de Ehrenberg has been taken upon himself by a friend of the late Baron's, who was present when he received the fatal wound. All the last requests regarding Monsieur le Baron's burial, according to the rites of his religion, will be with pious care observed. Should it soothe the grief of Madame la Baronne to witness the last honours paid to the dead, at midnight on the 2nd of March, a close carriage will be sent for Madame. The ceremony, owing to the unhappy state of Paris, can only be most private. Monsieur le Baron will be buried in the small grave-yard of the hospital. Madame need feel under no obligation to the unknown friend who thus has taken upon himself these last sad offices. It is a pure holy friendship which inspires him ;—where there is holy friendship there can be no painful obligation."

" Oh, again how selfish is my soul !" exclaimed Margaret, starting up from her bed in a wild anguish ; " how cruel, how selfish ! how have I forgotten to think of even the last sad duties to the dead ! God seeks, with terrible justice, to visit my cruel hardness upon my head. But better servants are found to do His work."

It was long before the Sister of Charity could succeed in restoring her to repose, so essential to her recovery. The Doctor shook his head more than ever, and pronounced it madness for her to persist in her intention of being present at the funeral.

But the nearer that sad midnight approached, the stronger, the calmer, poor Margaret became : she clothed herself as she arose from her sick-bed with the black dress prepared for her, asking no questions ; her heart seemed to have absorbed all common faculties or curiosity. When the time approached for the arrival of the expected carriage, she recognised its sounds with a quick instinct, though her ears had seemed closed to the awful roar of revolution often rolling around her during her illness.

She silently motioned to the Sister of Charity to follow her, as with rapid steps she descended to the mourning-carriage : she was assisted into it by her kind and attentive physician, who accompanied them to the little burial-ground which, at the back of the vast hospital, from the many windows of which shone out flickering lights, telling of watchers

by many a couch of suffering. God's beacons shone out of the dark heavens, watching a world of suffering, also; and in the distance fitfully tolled bells and rolled drums, and at times came upon the ear shouts and the chant of the Girondists and the Marseillaise hymn. A little procession, headed by white-robed choristers bearing tapers, proceeds from beneath a heavy archway: the golden crucifix gleams like a star as the torches flash upon it: the choristers chant a low hymn, swinging their censors: the bier, preceded by a couple of priests, comes slowly along: the black folds of the pall, the wreath of laurel, the broken sword and green felt-hat of the Baron lying upon the coffin disclosed by the red glare of torches borne by the choristers, by the priests, by the pall-bearers, and by a dark figure who walks alone bringing up the rear, and whose face is shrouded in his cloak.

Margaret, with faltering steps and a heart bleeding tears of blood, joins the procession, walking side by side with the solitary mourner. The physician and Sister of Charity follow them. They reach the open grave in the crowded church-yard: the funeral service is read: Margaret finds, with a strange surprise, that it is in the Baron's native tongue that it is read,—that the officiating priest is a German. The coffin is lowered into the dark earth: there is that sound of earth falling with a hollow thump upon the coffin-lid, of updrawn grating creaking cords, so sickening to human hearts.

A pale streak of early day, like a silver thread of hope, dawns along the dark horizon: the torches have smouldered away, the priests, the pall-bearers, the choristers, have vanished; the physician and the Sister of Charity have retired beneath that dark archway: but Margaret, as if petrified to the brink of the grave, stands yet leaning upon the arm of the silent mourner. The silver thread spreads and spreads along the sky, which grows ever bluer and bluer.

"Margaret! the future which lies before that poor corpse—before thee, my friend—before me—may God make as that silver thread," spoke a voice in familiar home-like German, close to Margaret's ear: and the voice was Xavier's: yet Margaret started not—she removed not her arm, but turned her white face, yet whiter in the cold light

of dawn, towards his, and her lips moved, but no words came forth.

"Here, Margaret," pursued the solemn voice, "upon the grave of thy husband I again see thee, and here it is that thou must wish me well upon a long journey I am about to commence; let thy prayers be with me, as mine ever will be thine, and as our united prayers will be for the poor dead."

"Thou hast no bitterness in thy soul against him?" muttered Margaret's trembling, stiff lips: "May God reward thee for thy charity, thy love!"

CHAPTER XII.

LO ! THE WINTER IS PAST ; THE RAIN IS OVER AND GONE.

IF we had seen our heroine towards the end of September in the year 1851, we should have found her in considerably more happy circumstances than those under which we parted with her. The silver thread of hope, and the azure of the heavens, have both widened and deepened.

We find her leaning upon the arm of Herbert Lushington ; she is still wearing mourning, and a deeper shade of earnestness than ever lies in her dark eyes : her beautiful hair has here and there a thread of silver among its gold ; but these to her are also rather "threads of hope" than of sorrow. The glory, the freshness of youth, has passed away from her since the climax of her grief, in that sad time in Paris : but a gentleness, a patience, a faith, a humility, have each day strengthened and bloomed within her spirit, casting around her countenance a hue of heaven more beautiful than any hue or glory of youth : a hue, a reflection, which will, one feels, only strengthen and increase in beauty the nearer and the nearer her steps approach the gates of heaven and of death. Herbert Lushington in his soul's garden has also similar sweet herbs blooming, which also fling similar lights and reflections upon his countenance : they are both faces, you say, which never grow old, for each day their spirits are approaching nearer immortality.

They are passing a quaint fountain in the beautiful stately gardens of Flimbsted manor : an old bronze Triton stretches forth his green arm blowing upon his shell, and rich festoons of gorgeous creepers, gold and coral, with their autumn tints, are wreathed around him. A flicker of richest sunshine gleams upon splashing water, green Triton, orange and vermillion creepers, broad water-lily leaves, and the two peace-

ful wanderers through the garden, who pause, and, remarking the beauty of the effects, fall into pleasant discourse of long past times, unutterably dear to both, and which this fountain, and the whole autumnal scene, have vividly called forth in both their memories.

But their discourse is cut short by the approach of another group of friends from a side garden, fenced in from the fountain and terraces by high walls of closely clipped box, the growth of several centuries. This group consists of no other than our dear Ludmilla—more beautiful, and far more joyous-looking than ever: round her beautiful neck and waist are wound the loving arms of a beautiful young girl—half child, half woman, who has Lushington's tender deep blue eyes, his luxuriant chesnut hair, his noble brow: one hand of Ludmilla's, upon which glitter in the sun-light two wedding-rings, lovingly resting side by side, is entwined in this beautiful hair: the other hand rests in the arm of her dear old father, our Hofrath and critic: he looks younger than ever, and his step is now constantly the step of a youth.

As the two groups approach, the young girl, kissing with loving lips the soft hand of Ludmilla, and carolling forth with a wild deep melody, "Mother, mine!" and untwining her arms lightly from around Ludmilla, darts forward like a young fawn towards Herbert Lushington, and twining them around him, leans her soft cheek lovingly upon his arm, accompanying him and Margaret in silent affection up towards the stately old house, from which already is tolling the sonorous dinner bell.

In this sweet young girl we would introduce to the reader a fresh joy in Margaret's life, the young Signild, in whom each day develops itself, in the atmosphere of love and art around her, a spirit in harmony with all that is noblest and most beautiful in the world.

Wonderful things, indeed, we see must have taken place since last we were in company with all these dear people, or before they thus could have been assembled in such peculiar relationships at that stately old Flimbsted manor.

Where was old Mrs. Lushington? Is she cooped up, poor old soul, in a sick-chamber? or is she preparing, perhaps, an

elaborate toilette for the dinner hour? No: she is cooped up in a strange chamber where never more mortal lips shall partake of dinner, however costly: she is cooped up in a marble sarcophagus within the walls of Flimbsted-little-stone Church, the slender spire of which you may see glittering in the sunshine over those autumnal woods yonder upon the hill-side. Thither, in the month of March, 1848, within four days of another funeral connected with our history, had the old lady's mortal remains been borne, with every imaginary pomp, in a hearse the handsomest that money could command, followed by a long train of carriages from all the first families in the county, the Flemings and Masseys of course among the number, with trains of servants following—with the pensioners of the Flimbsted bounty—with all the villagers of Flimbsted and Flimbsted-little-stone lining the road to the church, wearing, the men upon their hats, the women upon their bonnets, the finest black crape,—the gift of the deceased old lady—with a funeral sermon, preached by the bishop of the diocese,—with her pall supported by youths from the most aristocratic families in the shire: and so the great Mrs. Lushington of Flimbsted Manor, Flimbsted, —shire, descended into her marble tomb.

And so great is the ceremony, that an artist is dispatched straight from London to graphically convey, through the medium of the "Illustrated London News," the pomp of the rich Mrs. Lushington's funeral, of Flimbsted Manor, of Flimbsted, —shire, through the world and down to future generations, together with pictures of tragedies enacting at Paris in the same week; among them the death of the valiant and heroic Baron von Ehrenberg, the German refugee, shot dead on the barricade, before the church of St. Germains Auxerrois. And the Illustrated News that brought down into —shire this wonderful picture of worldly pomp, brought with it the first news, to his admiring friends, of the tragedy which terminated the earthly career of him who henceforth remains in their memories rather as the heroic than "as the fascinating Baron."

And after the great pompous funeral, came the great pompous reading of the will, with great pompous lawyers arriving from London, in great pompous carriages, sent to

meet them from the old house at the nearest station on the great line of railway.

But scarcely had the ceremony commenced, with all the relatives of the deceased assembled in the great dining-room, than the heir to the entailed property, Herbert Lushington, of whom no one had been able to give any account for these several months past, arrived.

What a bustle and flutter of sable garments there was in that sombre old wainscotted room, as the pale, ghost-like Herbert Lushington, with his eyes clearer and more wonderfully unearthly than ever, since he had passed through a portion of the shadow of the valley of death, entered the room, clad in his mourning garments! And with calm dignity he seated himself in an ebony chair inlaid with ivory, which stood at the head of the long oaken board which shone as if of polished steel, and motioned the solemn lawyer to recommence the reading of the large parchment.

And there was one clause which the solemn pompous lawyer, as he glanced his eye over to as he approached that portion of the document which would he expected produce an extraordinary effect upon the pale, ghost-like man seated at the head of the long table, he feared fainting—a fit, perhaps. Had he been possessed of a compassionate heart, holding this belief his voice would have faltered somewhat, as he read how, although the estate was entailed upon the said Herbert Lushington, together with the horses, carriages, family plate, linen, pictures, &c., &c., &c., bequeathed to him, yet that certain personal property of Anna Isabella Lushington, and certain moneys in the funds and in various railways, canal companies, &c., &c., amounting altogether to a vast property, were left to her dearly-beloved grand-nephew by marriage, Conrad Adelbert Baron von Ehrenberg, native of Munich, in Bavaria, and, in case of his decease, to her niece Margaret von Ehrenberg, his wife.

But, contrary to the expectation of the lawyers and all present, the pale man flushed a rosy-red, and such a hearty exclamation of delight burst from his lips, that, for the first moment, all believed that their ears must have deceived them. But though the rosy-red quickly faded into a white

as of old ivory, the pale Herbert Lushington again waved his hand with a calm dignity as signal for the lawyer to pursue his reading.

The other bequests followed, having reference to various public charities in the county-town, to the Flimbsted Bounty, which henceforth would be enriched by the bounty of Anna Isabella Lushington to Wilmot and an old housekeeper, to the female charity-school of Flimbsted-little-stone, and to the almshouses in the said village; but of one name there was no mention—and that was Mrs. Dorothea's, the almost life-long companion, the nurse, the humble, devoted, persecuted friend of the rich old lady!

As Lushington vainly listened to catch the name of this worthy woman, Mrs. Dorothea, this forgotten blessing of the rich old woman's life—a blessing as necessary to her, and as soon forgotten, as the air she breathed, as the pure water with which she had laved her poor body, now crumbling into corruption, as the light and sunshine which had shone about her for the seventy-nine years she had inhabited God's beautiful world, Lushington's pale face again “waxed rosy-red:” but this time with anger, not with joy; and when the lawyer had solemnly and pompously folded up his large parchment, Lushington stepped out before the whole assembly, who, many of them, had been casting glances towards the little, downcast, meek woman seated near the door, expecting also to hear her name come round among the benevolent bequests, and striding with the air of an indignant monarch, yet with the smile of an angel upon his lips, towards her, and taking up the cold hand of abashed little Dorothea, he said,—“ My dear cousin, in the presence of all our kindred here assembled, let it be known that if the once possessor of this mansion could forget so great a God's gift as you, I, the present possessor, cannot: my dear cousin, where my home is, your home is also.” And the little woman fell weeping out her full heart upon his manly breast, enfolded in his thin arms; and, though there was many a disappointed heart in the assembly, as poor old Dorothea's had been, there certainly at that moment was not a single dry eye.

Of what occurred during the following few months we can give but a most hasty sketch. Lushington began in

earnest to put into practice the theories of life which for years he had been developing within his brain and heart. All that philanthropy could do to benefit the inhabitants of the neighbourhood was commenced: there was, in the course of a year or so, such drainage, ventilation, and improvement of sewerage in the villages of Flimbsted and Flimbsted-little-stone, that the Sanitary Commissioners, who had in a body come down at Lushington's request for a regular consultation on the requirements of the neighbourhood, finding their benevolent plans so thoroughly and so beneficially carried out, have been holding up Flimbsted and Flimbsted-little-stone as an example to the whole English nation.

Then, there were schools for young and old, boys and girls, with every possible means provided for the enlightenment of the poor clodpoles; there were model cottages building with hollow bricks, and from plans furnished by the Board of Health; there was a savings-bank, public-baths and wash-houses—in short, it is impossible for me to say what that has been proposed of benevolent and christian in this age, that was not here tried by Lushington, and, on the whole, with the most surprising results.

But we must hasten to the end of our history. Signild, the beloved child, returned home to send the sunshine of buoyant youth through the old mansion. Dorothea and she instantly loved and appreciated each other.

Herbert Lushington, however, was filled with various cares; no news could be obtained of Margaret since her husband's sad death, except that, after remaining a week in her old lodging, she packed together her few possessions and departed. Unceasing were his enquiries. At length, from a clue obtained through Ludmilla and the Hofrath, who were equally anxious about their beloved and unhappy friend, Margaret was discovered in a quiet village of Devonshire, at work upon a landscape which must some day assume a high rank in the annals of art.

Lushington and Signild entering her cottage were as a vision from God to her.

She was surprised and extremely affected at the news of the great wealth thus singularly fallen upon her; and, after a secret sigh heaved in remembering for whom it had originally been intended, and saying to herself, "Alas! poor

Conrad, had you ever possessed such wealth perhaps you might have been shielded from your miserable temptations,"—she began, with her sanguine and benevolent enthusiasm, to build castles in the air untold for the amelioration of the sufferings of humanity, especially for the amelioration of the sufferings of women and of artists, with whom she had especial sympathies.

Her face was so worn, and her whole frame so shattered, that Lushington and Signild insisted there and then upon carrying her off with them to dear old Flimbsted; and the prospect was one too joyful for her to resist. And so, with her glorious landscape carefully packed up in a case hastily knocked together by the village carpenter, with her few clothes and her old easel and paint-box, which had witnessed so many changes, stowed away in Lushington's travelling-carriage,—the heiress, Margaret von Ehrenberg, entered the old home of her mother.

The meeting between herself and Mrs. Dorothea was extremely affecting; and to Margaret the most affecting thing of all in the new old home was the respect paid to her in this old house as the widow of the Baron, who to all these simple souls had become, through their imaginations, a kind of demi-god. Margaret had long arisen from that plain of selfish suffering when to hear praise bestowed in good faith, though undeserved, upon her unhappy husband, pained and irritated her. She thanked God that in the souls of many of these good people the memory of her husband was become a blessed thought. And God also she thanked for having preserved her, however goaded by misery, from having with her wife's tongue cast a slur upon his name. And gradually these constant praises on those simple lips became a balm and comfort to her bruised spirit.

Lushington proposed that, ere the autumn, Margaret, Signild, and he, should visit Ludmilla and the dear old Hoffrath; and both the ladies joyfully seconded his proposal. Dear old Mrs. Dorothea was left as manager of all the various works, public and private, going on at Flimbsted; and, certainly, seldom before had such an important, useful, happy little old woman existed as Mrs. Dorothea had now become. And truly she might be happy: for never was goodness more appreciated,—never had any one lived in a greater

atmosphere of love, internal and external,—and never had a life of toil been rewarded by a more blessed certainty of absence in old age of every earthly care.

The meeting of the dear friends and lovers,—for such Ludmilla's and Lushington's hearts had long declared each other,—was one of those passages of human life too holy to be described by pen unless it could write the words in a flood of celestial light. The dear old haunts were revisited by Margaret and Signild, who each day in that Art-city unfolded a soul which kindled into an enthusiasm of the deepest poetry at every vision of beauty revealed to her. Margaret standing in Kaulbach's or in Schwanthaler's studio, and seeing those beaming young eyes dilate with the first awakening emotion of divinest love and wonder, such as escapes towards our creation from artists' souls in presence of great artists' labours in an incense of burning joy and love, has clasped the dear child to her soul, and thanked God for placing in her path a being so noble, pure, and poetic, who might accomplish in her day that work which her own hands might prove too feeble ever to accomplish.

"Provided the work be done, what matters who is the labourer? only blessed is he indeed who doeth the work;" her soul would exclaim within itself.

Ludmilla and Lushington meantime were bathed in a bliss, a trust and one-heartedness, which augured a future as near to heaven as God, for His own wondrous and unfathomable purposes, ever permits to good pure souls upon the earth.

But though Bavaria was all this time peaceful, the rest of Germany was in an awful turmoil of blood and fire. Lushington longed to bear away with him in his cherishing arms Ludmilla as his bride. But it seemed cowardly to her, for any love, however holy, in an hour of even possible danger to leave her old parents. Lushington besought of them to return with him to the security, to the peace of an English home. But the Hofrath said of him *as a Hofrath*, (a court counsellor) it would be wrong to quit his country,—so what was to be done? Lushington neither, whatever his heart urged him to do, could not stay with them in Munich, for his grown-up children, his clodhoppers, his untaught and unwashed children, were crying out for

him at home; and dear little Mrs. Dorothea had found affairs growing too complicated for even her willing brain and clever hands to manage. So at last the subject was suddenly decided by Signild, who, stepping forth into the family counsel, said, in her clear, decided voice, and with her fine eyes dilating as she spoke,—

“Father, it is right for you to go home to your grown-up children, who are calling out for you. It is right for my new, dear, pretty mother,”—Signild, be it observed, had from the first moment she learned of the approaching marriage of her father insisted upon calling Ludmilla mother,—“it is right for my new, dear, pretty mother to stay with her father and mother; it is right for her father to stay with his king. And it is right for Aunt Margaret and me to stay here with my dear mother; for if she is in trouble and danger she may want us all the more because *you* can’t stay with her. Aunt Margaret and I shall be in no danger; it is right for us to stay, and Aunt Margaret can paint some pictures here this quiet winter to surprise you, father, and I can learn so much here; it is good and right to stay here.—Let us.”

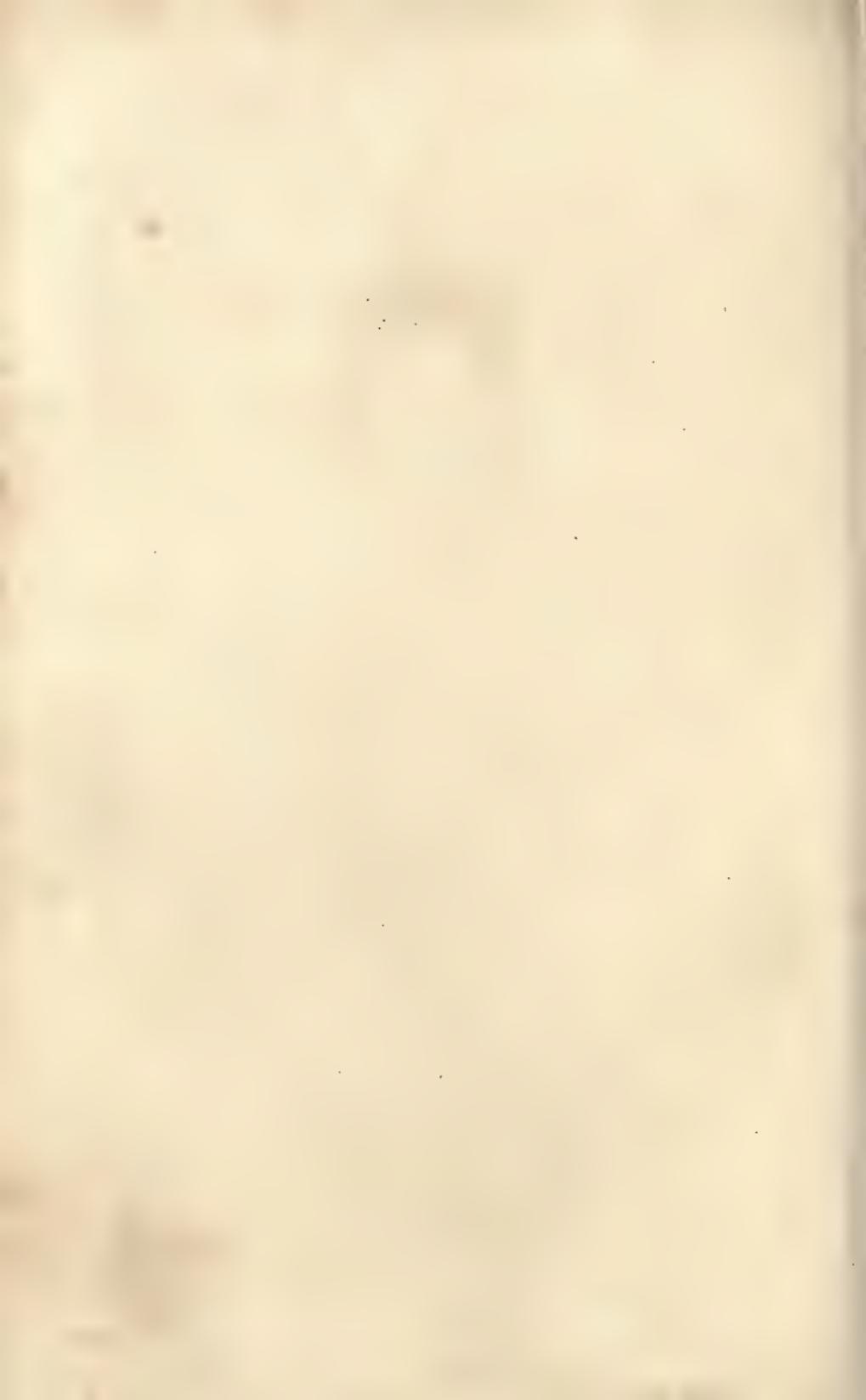
And Lushington agreed with his child, and so did Margaret; and thus another winter was spent by Margaret in Munich; and, strange to relate, it was the most blessed time she had ever spent there. All was calm and happy, and Signild increased both in stature and beauty of soul and body daily.

With the spring came peace for a time. The cities and plains no longer reeked with blood; and with the blossoms of May arrived Lushington, and such a quiet but holy bridal as was celebrated by the noble betrothed lovers was rarely ever immortalised by poet’s song; and when the wedded pair started upon a tour through the heavenly Tyrol, Margaret and Signild returned to Flimbsted, to prepare for the reception of Signild’s beloved parents.

But how much did they find prepared for their reception! A lovely little house was rising in the loveliest part of the park, which Mrs. Dorothea, with the greatest glee in her eyes, told her was to be Margaret’s home, if she only liked it; and if she liked it, she wanted to live with her, and take all housekeeping cares from off her shoulders. And what a



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little home it would be ! erected after the type of a certain house she had particularly admired in Munich,—and the most wonderful studios connected with it. Did she like it ? never had she dreamed of such a home. But there were yet other things prepared by Lushington's exquisite taste and love for all the beings dear to him. Until Margaret's own house was completed, there was her suite of rooms in the old house. Her bed-room was the identical one, with the turret-window, she had slept in in her early girlhood ; and opening out of it was her temporary painting-room, and in it, assembled as by magic, the casts of statues most loved by her in Munich ; prints from frescoes and pictures most loved by her there, and in the Louvre ; a lovely series of water-colour landscapes by our first English artists ; and, hung in a recess of the window, a lovely miniature of Margaret's mother, painted from a girlish sketch of hers by Margaret Gillies, one of our best miniature painters, and a friend of Lushington's. He knew she would choose this lady's work, rejoicing, as she did, in seeing her sisters excel in art. And there, too, stood her mother's old harpsichord.

Signild's rooms were also lovely ; and, for the new wife and mistress, what beauties, what comforts in the dear old home. In the village, also, how things had progressed towards completion. How wondrously busy Lushington had been.

What an arrival in her English home it was to the happy bride ! how her eyes swam with blissful tears as the bells, pealing from the spire of Flimbsted-little-stone Church, the joyous sound swam in delicious gushes across the richly wooded dales and slopes of the park, as,—amid waving hats and handkerchiefs of the happy villagers, old and young—of the children from the schools—of the labourers from the fields, all well-washed in the public baths for the occasion,—the beloved pair drove to the portal of the old mansion. There Margaret, Signild, Dorothea, and behind them Wilmot and the other servants, awaited them with tears of joy.

But the most beautiful moment of the bride's first evening in her English home was after tea in Margaret's studio, when the stars began to glimmer in the green evening sky—when the breath of roses and jasmine faintly diffused itself through the lovely quaint room—and when, all silently,

sat in a beautiful hush of joy too deep for words ; and Signild, as if feeling the whole sentiment of the hour, rose silently, opened the harpsichord, and sent forth to God upon wings of music an impromptu song of praise, so deep, so fervent, that all listening wept, and, had they seen above the brow of the inspired child the rose crown of St. Cecilia, they would have not been astonished.

A few words yet remain to be said regarding several of our characters. The marvellous Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, during the summer of 1851, had united, as if by the spell of an enchanter, all our Munich acquaintance. The Arab physician also found his way, in his shrouded costume, within its walls : in fact, he, being a learned and distinguished man in his country, had been entrusted with the care of certain specimens of rare gums and drugs ; and, seated among the richly tinted and gorgeous fabrics in the Tunis Court, was found one day by Lushington, to his surprise and pleasure, gravely discoursing with one of the scarlet-feized and sallow-visaged guardians of that bazaar of wonders.

The Arab physician, the good gendarme and his little Ernest, now upon the point of entering as student at the Munich Academy of Arts—and whom also Margaret, who accompanied Lushington that day to the Crystal Palace, had recognised—were all three carried down to Flimbsted by their English friends the day following, where they were ready to celebrate the christening of a certain little Margaret Ludmilla Lushington. The old Hofrath and his wife were there several weeks before them ; and what a happy christening it was ! To celebrate it a number of model cottages, and a fine library for the village, were thrown open ; and there were such rejoicings in the village itself—such tea-drinkings of the different schools in the park, and such a hearty assembly of pleasant people within old Flimbsted Manor, that the christening of Margaret Ludmilla Lushington remained in the minds of the Arab physician, of the gendarme, and of little Ernest, and of various other

foreign visitors, as one of the most beautiful pictures of England they had met with in their visit to the Great Exhibition.

Whilst the rejoicings were at their height in the village of Flimbsted, and whilst the singing of school-children was rising fitfully above the plantations, mingled with much hurrahing, a carriage covered with dust, in which sat several foreigners, stopped to change horses at the little inn of the Lushington Arms. One of the ladies, who was constantly making use of her lorgnette, was very inquisitive regarding these rejoicings, and regarding the family at the hall, requesting a gentleman of the party, who spoke English, to make a thousand-and-one inquiries within the space of the five minutes of their stay.

As the carriage dashed out of the village it encountered three pedestrians, also like the carriage-people foreigners, on a tour through England. These figures were rather peculiar in their pedestrian costume, wearing netted pouches adorned with deep fringe slung around them; and one meagre little man, who seemed ever to emulate the stride and action of the tallest and burliest of his companions, wore a green Tyrolese hat. They also were very inquisitive about the festivities; and hearing the name, were still more profuse in their questions from the landlord regarding the family, and whether "*the lady*" were not a German. Ludmilla's marriage had made a great talk throughout the good gossiping city of Munich, where Lushington had been magnified into a *prince*. Thus no wonder that Schneider, Kleider, and little Lamm, were inquisitive about the "family," when suddenly and unexpectedly they found themselves amid the scenes of its greatness.

Of Xavier I can alone say, that a gentleman just returned from tropical South America brought word that very day of the christening, to the Hofrath von Rosenthal, that he had encountered a young countryman of his, who, accompanied by a French physician, had been for above two years pursuing botanical researches in those regions with extraordinary success; that these travellers had intrusted him with some most valuable specimens of plants they had discovered; and that these plants having been laid by him, at their

request, before some of the first medical men in Paris and London, had been pronounced to possess marvellous healing qualities. He spoke also with enthusiasm of their collections of drawings and dried specimens.

Margaret von Ehrenberg, we may be sure, was at no loss to divine in these two adventurers her old friend Xavier and *Monsieur le Docteur*.

THE MELDRUM FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

JAMES MELDRUM AMONG THE METHODISTS.

JAMES MELDRUM was a labourer: he was of the race of labourers: he might almost be said to be of the *variety* labourer; for there are as complete and contrasting varieties established by long habit in the human race as in any of the inferior animals. A cart-horse is not more distinct from a racer, than a regular hereditary clodpole from a fine gentleman; circumstances have made them both physically and intellectually. What a mere piece of agricultural machinery is the labourer in many rural districts! from age to age his line has descended on the same spot, doing the same things, and knowing them only. Of all the great movements and events of the world beyond his parish he knows nothing. To plough and sow, to reap and mow, to wash sheep in summer, and thrash corn in winter; to clean ditches and splash hedges; to eat, drink, and sleep; so the world goes round, and he goes round with it, like any other natural fixture of the scene, tree, stone, or pasturing cattle. He is truly of the earth—earthy.

Such is the labourer in many a thoroughly farming obscure place. From age to age “nobody has cared for his soul.” True, there may be a church in the parish, or there may not. In many a great corn-growing parish there is no such thing, and where there is, and the labourer gets to it, it is to take a good sound nod, rather than to hear the sermon. Nothing but the stimulus of the open air can keep him awake.

But this is the creature of the wold and the wild. In other agricultural parishes, the weekly attendance at church and chapel, the parish and the Sunday school, and the newspaper read at the barber's shop or the village inn, have sent some light into the darkness; enough, at least, to let the labourer know that he is a wretched creature. Ay, well may this class talk of the good old times. There *were* good old times for them. It is no fable. Times when each had his old-fashioned thatched cottage, his garden, his pigstye, and if, as often was the case, on the edge of a common, his cow. Those were the times for the labourer. His mind, indeed, did not stretch beyond his own neighbourhood, nor had it need; there lay all that he required in life—peace, plenty, and contentment. He worked hard, and he fed well. He paid to his club against sickness and old age, and for the rest life itself was an enjoyment that filled his whole living horizon. In the quietness and freshness of the country his days sped on not without their humble pleasures. In the old-fashioned equality of the village society he was at ease. The squire, if squire there were, was too far aloft to trouble his thoughts. But the parson had a friendly word for him when they met, and the former was a sort of old patriarch that was respected, but yet familiarly addressed. At his table they sat at sheep-shearing, at harvest-time, and amid Christmas jollities.

Proud thus to meet his smiles, to share his tale,
His nuts, his conversation, and his ale.

Such were the days,—of days long past I sing,
When pride gave place to mirth without a sting ;
Ere tyrant customs strength sufficient bore
To violate the feelings of the poor ;
To leave them distanced in the maddening race,
Where'er refinement shows its hated face :
Nor causeless hatred ;—'tis the peasant's curse,
That hourly makes his wretched station worse;
Destroys life's intercourse ; the social plan,
That rank to rank cements as man to man ;
Wealth flows around him, fashion lordly reigns ;
Yet poverty is his, and mental pains.

Methinks I hear the mourner thus impart,
The stifled murmurs of a wounded heart :—

“ Whence comes this change, ungracious, irksome, cold ?
Whence the new grandeur that mine eyes behold ?

The widening distance which I daily see?
Has wealth done this?—then wealth's a foe to me;
Foe to our rights; that leaves a powerful few,
The paths of emulation to pursue:—
For emulation stoops to us no more;
The hope of humble industry is o'er.
The blameless hope, the cheering sweet presage
Of future comforts for declining age.
Can my sons share from this paternal hand
The *profits* with the *labours* of the land?
No, though indulgent Heaven its blessing deigns,
Where's the *small farm* to suit my scanty means?
Content, the poet sings, with us resides,
In lowly cots like mine, the damsel bides;
And will be there, in raptured visions tell,
That sweet CONTENT with WANT can never dwell.

* * * * *

BLOOMFIELD.

Such was the condition of things in the days of Robert Bloomfield. Such was it in our own. We remember the retreating glimpses of it. We have seen poor men happy at the farmer's table; we have seen them happy in the farmer's fields. Nature and the society of their old friends were full of joy to them. The labourer, banking up his fences in the early spring, felt nature at his heart as he saw the growing bud, and smelt the delicious violet. In the green-growing corn, with the lark carolling in the blue bright sky above him, he weeded out the golden charlock, and with his neighbours chatted and joked over the past and present life of the village. The hay-field, the harvest-field, they were as gladsome as any poet has described them. But in James Meldrum's days, "the Peasant's Curse," as Bloomfield calls it, had fallen considerably over the country. Squires were grown into lords, and had become far grander than were their own fathers. Farmers were grown squires, and little farms had vanished. The commons too had vanished; and the clearing system had commenced, by which cottages gradually disappeared, and villages dwindled into a few scattered cottages, and large farms, and large parks, presented a melancholy stateliness. Where it was not so easy to clear off the population, Union workhouses raised their new-fangled heads, and filled the hearts of the peasantry with new-fangled wonder and alarm.

Things, however, were far from having come to the worst, and there were, here and there, parishes that to a certain degree had escaped the rapid progress of the modern plague of *aristocratism*—a deadly spirit, glittering and cold as polished silver; insinuating itself into every grade, from the peer to the pedlar.

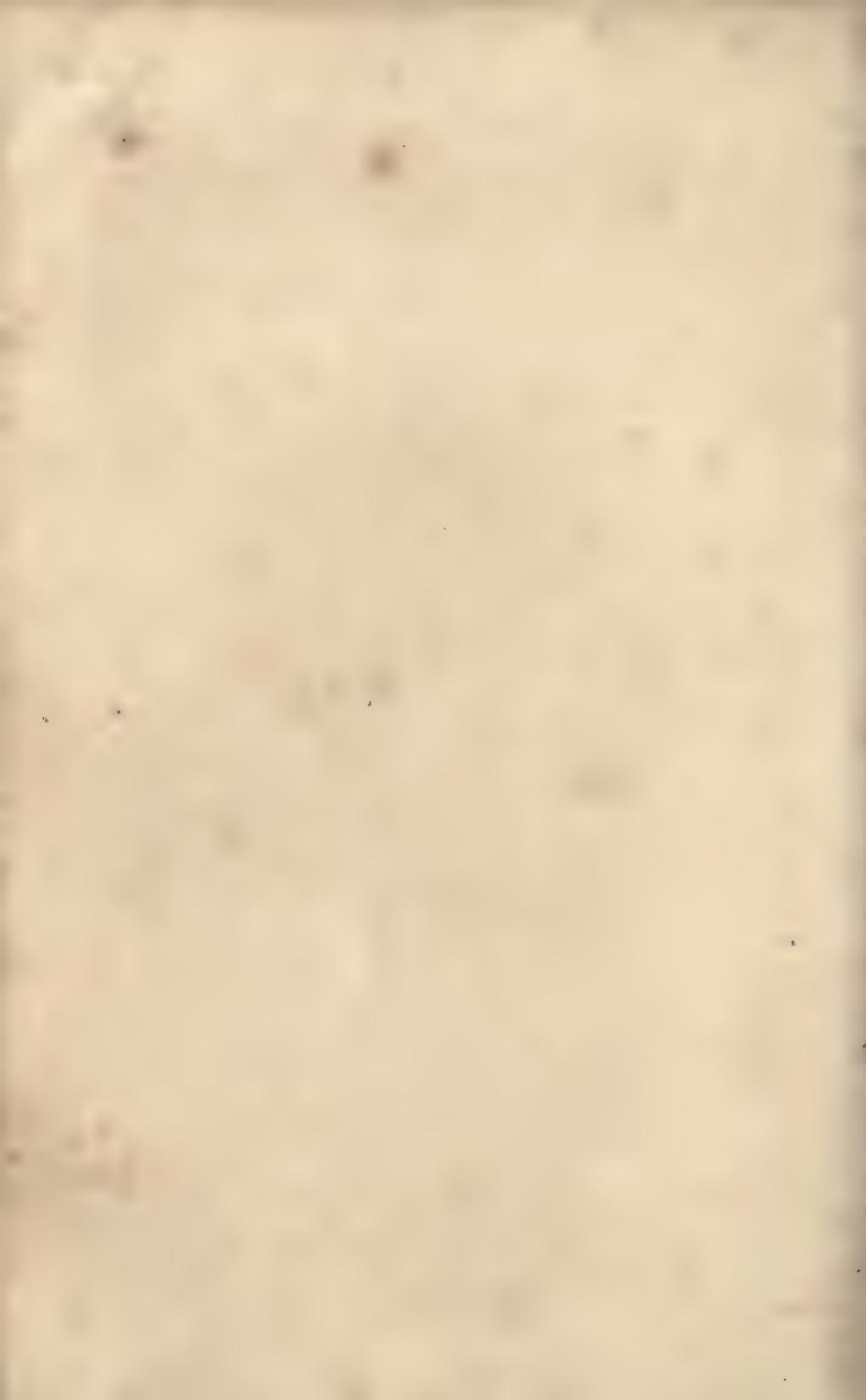
Beecup, the village in which James Meldrum lived, lay about seven miles and a half from the pretty town of Reading. Here was he born, and here he had lived all his life, as his ancestors had done before him. The village lay scattered round a considerable green, which could hardly be called a common,—it was too small, yet allowing a fine breathing space amid the woodlands, which stretched for miles around it. A deep, clear, but somewhat sluggish river flowed not far from the village, and a hall built in the last century, but rarely inhabited by its possessor, gave character to the otherwise flat scenery.

Meldrum had an old thatched cottage and a good large garden at the edge of the green, and at the time we begin to take notice of him was about fifty years of age, and reckoned a very well-to-do man. He worked for a farmer not a quarter of a mile from his own home, and earned twelve shillings a week. True, this was not a sum to constitute a very well-to-do man, but James Meldrum had, what is called, a very notable wife. A quiet, tall, thin, but sensible plodding woman was Mrs. Meldrum, and she not only helped her husband and the three children, a girl and two boys, fast growing up, to keep the garden in order in the evenings after they came from work, but she kept a little shop. The boys too, were employed to drive the plough, and the like, and added to the family income. The Meldrums were a well-to-do family.

The squire, we have said, came rarely to the hall. In fact he was a minor, and had been at distant schools and universities, and now was on his travels abroad. There was a talk of his coming, on his return, to live at the hall, but that time was not yet arrived. The steward was an old gentleman farmer, who had been steward to his father, and though he had gradually advanced rents was by no means rigid or extortionate. The clergyman was also an old man, who duly preached on Sunday, and on week days was



Mildrum's Fine.



seldom seen, for he was a great botanist, and was never so happy as when rambling over the distant heaths, and through the woods. Things went on pretty easily at Beecup.

Nay, the Methodists, who were then on the look-out for all neglected localities, had found their way into Beecup, and soon won three-fourths of the people. They had an old barn converted into a chapel. One or two of the farmers, who secretly grumbled at the tithes paid to the vicar, were favourable to them, and said it was quite right that while the old clergyman only troubled himself to gather weeds and such-like rubbish, *somebody* should look after the poor people's souls. There was wanted a Sunday school in the village, and the Methodists had one in their chapel. So things went on smoothly. The old vicar never troubled himself about either chapel or school. He was just as kind and friendly to those who went to the chapel as to those who came to the church, when he saw them at all. The steward never troubled himself about any one, so that they paid their rents, kept up their fences, did not run out their lands, or meddle with the game.

James Meldrum was a Methodist; he was a class-leader amongst them. In his youth he had been a wild young fellow, as wildness goes in such places. He had been associated with a knot of the wildest young fellows in the place. Had been a great frequenter of wakes, fairs, and dancing parties. There was no face better known at the public-house than his, and in all matches of boxing, wrestling, foot races, cricket, nine-pins, and the like, he was most active. Twice he had enlisted when not very sober at "The Statutes," but had been bought off by a collection amongst his comrades; and there were whisperings of certain exploits in which he had a hand, which, if well proved, would have given the law a rough hold of him.

When the Methodists first came into Beecup, Meldrum had been one of a set who took a particular delight in annoying and disturbing them. All those country tricks and plots which were so commonly played off on the Methodists were played off here, and Meldrum was one of the ring-leaders of them. On one occasion, squibs and crackers were laid, and so connected with a train of gunpowder, that when

all the people were down on their knees in earnest and vociferous prayers in the evening, these were sent off; and bouncing and banging in the faces of the astonished worshippers, produced the most excessive alarm and outcries, to the infinite delight of the rogues without. On another occasion, by means of a key made by the blacksmith's apprentice, they had, on a Saturday night, introduced a pig into the pulpit, which being enormously fed by them at the time, had slept as soundly as a top till the moment that the preacher was about to enter the pulpit, when, roused by the coming in of the people, it had pricked up its ears, and astonished the audience by several mysterious grunts, and was not discovered till the unlucky preacher, ascending the pulpit steps, and opening the door, it rushed out between his legs, and both pig and terrified minister rolled down the stairs together, amid a mingled uproar of affright, indignation, and laughter, from the ungodly conspirators, most scandalous to the place and occasion.

At another time they had scattered snuff all over the floor; so that, as the people moved about, and especially as they knelt down to pray, it was stirred up by the clothes, especially the women's, and there was nothing but an universal sneezing, that wholly spoiled the meeting, though the persecuted people stood it out like martyrs. Another time, when the old woman opened the doors of the chapel, at the last minute for the Sunday morning service, behold there was not a seat left in the place, and the people had to stand the whole time, these young fellows having carried them out, and sunk them with stones in the neighbouring Loddon.

But for all these pranks young Meldrum paid a severe penalty. On one occasion when he had gone to scoff, he remained to pray. The preacher drew such a picture of the state of such as himself, was such a lively geographer of certain regions of retribution with all their burning brimstone rocks, and fiery serpents, and fiends, much more familiar than agreeable, that James Meldrum was terrified and thunderstruck at the certainty of his own damnation. It was in vain that he attempted to drown his fear in drink, or to laugh it off. It followed him into the field at his work, and wrung from him an almost bloody perspiration.

It haunted him at night, so that he dared not go out after dark, and in his dreams, till he awoke in the most terrible alarm. His health forsook him, he trembled as with an ague, and the same impulsive temperament which had made him foremost in these disgraceful doings now drove him to desperation. He had rushed out one night, spite of his former terror, and hurried down to the river's bank. There, at the moment when, at the bottom of a deep and hollow lane, he reached the river, and was about to fling himself into its gloomy flood, a voice close to him cried "Halt!" a strong grasp was laid on his arm, and he saw the features of the well-known Methodist minister, examining him with a sharp and searching sternness. He saw him as clearly as if it was day, though it was pitch dark, for a fire seemed to blaze over them from his own heated brain.

"Meldrum! is that you?" exclaimed the preacher. "What! has the devil then got such hold of you as to drive you to a destruction like this? What! was he not sure enough of you, to let you run on a while longer in doing his work, but he must have you leap at once into hell? No! he was *not* sure enough of you if he gave you time, for he knows God's long-suffering, and that he would, one day or another, snatch you as a brand from the burning. And he'll do it! It is for this that he has sent me to meet you at this moment, though I only thought I was going to visit and pray by a poor sick brother in your village. The Lord be praised for his mercies!"

At this unexpected encounter and address, Meldrum's knees failed; he sank down upon them before the preacher, and in an agony implored him to tell him "if there were any hope for him, if God *could* forgive such a dreadful sinner." "Can he?" said the preacher, "what can he not do? What does he not do every day? What did he send his Beloved Son to this wicked world for, but to seek and to save all that were lost? Rise, young man, and go with me to the village. God is still stronger than the devil. He can, and he no doubt will, save thee, or he had not sent me just in the nick of time. His ways are merciful."

Meldrum walked back, listening to the words of the very man whom he had insulted by putting the pig into the pulpit, and had tried to alarm, by making hideous groans as he went,

after a late meeting at night, through the woods, close to this spot. He thought that such a wretch as himself could never expect salvation ; but the preacher told him that it only the more clearly showed God's favour and mercy, and added to his glory. In short, within a week, Meldrum was down on his knees, in the middle of the chapel floor, confessing all his sins and follies in the midst of the people he had ridiculed and persecuted, and who now kept ejaculating aloud, "Wonderful! Christ Jesus be praised! Amen! Another brand plucked from the burning! O, thou lover of souls, we magnify thy name!" &c., &c.

"The great conversion of James Meldrum the scoffer" was soon sounded through the Methodist meetings far and wide. It figured in the magazine—it became the burthen of a tract ; and Meldrum himself, as zealous in religion as he had been against it, gradually rose to be a leader among these people. Nor was this accomplished without a full repayment of the persecution he had inflicted. He had it now himself from his former comrades. He had it in the most pitiless ridicule, in the most irritating insults ; in the names of sneak and coward, and saint and hypocrite, when he came near them. In the village street he had continually to run the gauntlet of their gibes, and sometimes of their rough attacks. They knocked off his hat—asked him to preach them a sermon, imitating the manner and tone of the Methodist preachers,—would come out of the ale-house, and put a tankard to his mouth, saying, "Off with that sanctified, sanctified mask, Meldrum! You once could be merry enough. Come, drink man, and be yourself again." At other times they would challenge him to fight, and fetch him a blow to exasperate him, and pursue him with the names of coward and fool.

Through all this Meldrum went with the spirit of a martyr. He deigned them no word, but kept on his way, as well as they would let him, in solemn silence. They tried another plan of annoyance. There was a great strong wild fellow of the name of Berkhamshire, but who was much better known by the name of Big Bow-wow, for his sometimes crying bow-wow to the children to frighten them, as he came behind them, when half or wholly in his cups. Big Bow-wow was one of those men who are to be found everywhere :

of a large handsome person, and endowed with an amount of natural wit and talent, that, properly trained and directed, would rise to distinction anywhere, but which, lost in some obscure scene, and having no early guidance, throw out their strength in an exuberant wildness and utter neglect of every restraint of conscience or principle, that makes them at once the wonder of the ale-house circle, and, indeed, of any one who comes to close conversation with them, but whose life is one long disorder, and their end ruin.

Big Bow-wow led a life of utter libertinism. He laughed at the restraint of marriage, and made conquest of some of the finest women of the neighbourhood. He affected to treat the Bible as a mere fable, and had by the end all those quibbles and objections which have travelled from the pages of Voltaire, Volney, and that school, into the remotest corners of the country, and into the minds of those who never could read a line. He loved to puzzle the villagers with the question, whether the hen or the egg was made first ; and to explain the story of Jonah by representing the ship in which he sailed as a public-house with the sign of the Ship, out of which he was thrown for not paying his shot, and the whale which swallowed him up as another public-house of that sign where he drunk three days, and was then vomited up, or cast out by the landlord for the same cause.

With all his lawlessness and wickedness, Big Bow-wow had at the same time a degree of good nature, and a manner, that easily won on those that he came near. Falling in, therefore, with Meldrum, he affected to listen to his reproofs of his loose life, and his warnings, and Meldrum endeavoured to persuade him to come to the chapel and begin a new life. At this Big Bow-wow only laughed and shook his head for some time, but after much entreaty and many conversations he at length went, and seemed to be much impressed, grew very serious, and went often. The conversion of such a reprobate was, of course, a matter of uncommon triumph. Big Bow-wow was much caressed, and at length admitted to Meldrum's class. When Meldrum had questioned some of the other brethren of the state of their souls and given them suitable advice, the turn came to Big Bow-wow. Amid the assumed gravity of that expressive countenance, any one but the simple and enthusiastic James Meldrum might have seen

the suppressed signs of a mischief that was about to burst forth at the first word; and no sooner did Meldrum congratulate him on seeing him there, and ask him how he felt now in his mind, anticipating a hasty glance at his past life, and a very song of holy triumph at his present converted state, than the incurable wag exclaimed, "Eh, James, what rogues thou and I have been! Eh! if all that we have done could be known, lad: why it would hang us both. Dost thou remember it?"

"Stop!" cried the terrified Meldrum; "Stop, brother! so open a confession here is not needful. Enough that thou hast repented: all that is now erased out of the book of God's remembrance."

"Ah, James! art thou sure of that? Hast thou seen the book itself? I wish to heaven it may! But I doubt it. Oh! I doubt it sorely. Dost thou remember that pack-man that we —" "Stop, stop, man!" reiterated Meldrum, with the utmost vehemence: "Stop, I command thee— pollute not the ears of the innocent with the crimes and the deeds that are repented of. Enough, enough, that they are repented of in sackcloth and ashes,—that they are trodden on, disdained, and detested."

"Trodden on, disdained, and detested!" re-echoed Big Bow-wow; "Ay, but never to be washed out of my heart and remembrance: Oh! that robbery of——that cheating of——at the fair, that drunken rioting at——Oh! they'll hang us both, lad, if they are known, and I must out with them: I must make a clean breast of it."

Meldrum, pale as a ghost, and endeavouring to drown the fellow's voice by as loud remonstrance, clapped his hand on Big Bow-wow's mouth, and cried with tones of thunder, "Cease, villain! I command thee cease. It is false. It is a vile heap of lies. Bad enough have we been, but when did we rob? when did we cheat? when did we —?"

"Dost thou not remember?" cried Big Bow-wow, delighted at thus having contrived to ridicule Meldrum before his class, and his whole face and form seeming to glow with the enjoyment of it: "Dost thou not remember? Then I will tell thee."

But Meldrum at this fresh menace called on his brethren to help him to turn this wolf out of the sheepfold: and with

many a struggle, and still vociferating a stream of crimes as committed by Meldrum and himself enough to have muddied a huge river, the fellow was pitched into the street and the door closed upon him.

If the roof of Meldrum's house, in which they were, had fallen in, or the floor had rocked and gaped to swallow them up, the company could not have been more astonished. A silence like that which follows the shock of an earthquake followed. The members of the class gazed upon one another in wonder, and James Meldrum sank exhausted in a chair.

The class was broken up for the time—the members hurried to depart. "Vile man!" ejaculated Meldrum, as reverting mentally to the scene. "Vile man!" echoed the departing guests, with an abstraction that left a painful uncertainty whether the words applied to Big Bow-wow or to the unhappy class-leader. There will never be found a slanderer without numbers eager to believe him. The scandal created by Big Bow-wow took effect. There were some of Meldrum's brethren and sisters who were or affected to be excessively shocked and alarmed at the things laid to Meldrum's charge. He was called to a strict account; there were many meetings, many scrutinies, many closettings with ministers and class-leaders, and many heartburnings. James Meldrum was shorn down as by the blast of an evil power. He went about dark in countenance, as it were, withered and shrunk up in body, and with a silence of step which proclaimed him a disgraced man. Without, the laughter and scorn of the enemy was unbounded. The exploit of Big Bow-wow was the theme of every ale-house the country round, and Meldrum could be seen nowhere without sarcastic jokes being flung at him, and the confessions of Big Bow-wow being repeated with derision. This persecution followed him into the very work-field and the barn, and the evident shyness of his religious brethren, and his being reduced from a class-leader to an ordinary member, told to the world that his enemies' accusations had not fallen without effect.

Time, however, cures many evils and sets many wrongs right, and at the period of our first acquaintance with James Meldrum he was once again the leader of his class. The preachers, who came from a distance, made his house

their head quarters. He was steady as time in his work. His two sons were out in farm-service in the neighbourhood. His wife's shop-keeping seemed to flourish. The members of his society seemed to look up to him, and many pleasant "love-feasts," and as pleasant tea-drinkings on Sundays and holidays at each other's houses, seemed to proclaim that the union introduced by religious conviction was the key to the true enjoyment of life.

James Meldrum was at this period a man of a peculiarly solemn and silent character. On Sundays, his suit of drab, his coat cut short, and with metal buttons; his drab trowsers, and low-crowned broad-brimmed hat, all of which had seen some years' wear, gave him an invariable outward stamp. He was about the middle size, thin, but with strong bony structure. His countenance, somewhat long, was of a deep ruddy hue, and his dark eyes, set between shaggy dark eyebrows, gave an expression of a certain melancholy enthusiasm to the whole face, which, indeed, was truly indicative of his temperament. He was a man of keen sensitive feelings, which in their time had been deeply tried, and the slander and persecution which he had experienced from various sides had tended to throw him more and more exclusively into the bosom of his religious society, and especially so of the section belonging to his own immediate neighbourhood. He seemed to brood over things which never found expression; and yet there was a fire of feeling within him which could soon flame up and show strong signs of its power, though it rarely blazed out to the day. It was only in moments of religious excitement that this came forth, and in some of the private prayer-meetings of this body his fits of enthusiasm amounted to something at times like phrensy, and he would betray by his language that the slanders which had been heaped on him had sunk deeply, and, though they might be forgiven, never could be forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

MR. WOODCROFT MEADOWLANDS INTRODUCES A CHANGE AT BEECUP ;
HOW THIS AFFECTS THE MELDRUMS.

THE time was now come which was to make a severe change in his circumstances. Great God ! how fearful is that condition of society in which the will of one man can change the fortunes of thousands of Thy immortal creatures ! in which one man's fiat can uproot quiet and happy homes ; can cause houses to vanish like mushrooms ; can depopulate and demoralize ; can send honest and reposing beings on a downward career of distress, exasperation, crime, and ruin. And all this destruction of happiness and virtue perpetrated in the name of law and right, and on the avowed claim to *do what they like with their own !*

Great God ! millions of thy creatures are perpetually appearing before Thy throne to demand peace for themselves and pity for their children : they cry—" We went to the earth which thou hast made, and hast given for the place of our trial, and there was no place for us. There are those who call *thine* own *their* own ; they hold what they cannot use ; they hoard up what they cannot eat ; they have closed the earth against those whom thou sendest thither to possess it for a time, and to do Thy will. Lord, how long ? how long ?

And Christ says,—“ Did they give you a cup of cold water in my name ? ” And they reply,—“ They gave us fire.”

“ Ye were naked : did they clothe you ? ” “ No.”

“ Ye were an hungered : did they feed you ? ” “ No.”

“ Ye were sick, and in prison : did they visit you ? ” And the reply is one vast “ No ! ” that rolls through heaven, and is answered on earth by—REVOLUTION.

Let us return to our story. The heir to the estate at Beecup, the proprietor of the whole parish, had now finished his education, made his tour, and come home. His educa-

tion and his survey of other countries, of course, had been accomplished with the object of making him a finished gentleman, and so wise and enlightened as to be able to manage his property to the best advantage, and to fill his responsible situation in the best manner for his own good and the good of his country. We say of course, because what other object ought education, and travel, which is but a part of it, to have? A man who has an extraordinary slice of his country is bound in all reason to do corresponding service to his country. Let us see how this young man did it.

Some of those simple souls who are always expecting to see the world move on, and people get better and wiser every day, expected great things from this Mr. Woodcroft Meadowlands. So much had been spent in his education, really much must come of it. Then people have a natural notion of the generosity and liberality of youth. Golden youth! as poets call it, is always expected to be something more brilliant and good than the old rusty iron that went before it. But the mischief of it is, that this golden youth, in nine cases out of ten, turns out to be only *gilt*, and the gilt wears off dreadfully fast in the jostling path of ordinary life. Golden youth in a very few years shows the old and rusty iron most provokingly peeping through. But don't let us condemn Mr. Woodcroft Meadowlands before we have seen him: very likely he may turn out better than the bargain—one of those ancient phœnixes that have been missing a wretchedly long time.

And to say truth, Mr. Woodcroft Meadowlands had been too well educated to change readily. He had, as a little boy, a tutor, the Rev. Sharpe Lookout, who told him that he would be a very great man when he grew up, and have three good church livings to give away. Mr. Sharpe Lookout therefore seized the very earliest opportunity of instilling a benevolent and grateful disposition into his pupil. "Remember, my dear boy, when you come to your estate, all that I have done for you: show yourself grateful for my indefatigable endeavours to please you in every possible way." And Mr. Sharpe Lookout had done it: he had indulged the golden youth's every idle propensity of playing tricks on the servants, shooting at the farmers'

pigeons, tormenting young birds and squirrels, and the like : he had promised him wonders if he could only be his private tutor at Oxford, and travel with him.

Under such able and indulgent hands Mr. Meadowlands would no doubt have thriven into something amazing ; but old Meadowlands once caught his son wiping his slate with his finest wig, which had just been brought in newly dressed by the valet, and Sharpe Lookout, who was not remembering the qualities of his name circumspectly enough, laughing at the joke with all his might. This old Meadowlands observed through the open window on the lawn, which he had approached to ask Lookout and his son to take a walk with him down to the dog-kennels. Amazed and confounded, the old squire stood stock-still, screened by the mass of curtains at the side of the open window, and saw further. Young Meadowlands having wiped his slate, as stated, threw the wig on the floor of the drawing-room, amid the convulsive laughter of Lookout, and then rung the bell ; and, on the valet appearing, said, with well-feigned astonishment, " See, Tom, what the Italian greyhound has done : he has pulled the wig off the table and mauled it pretty nicely, as you may see. What will the old governor say to you, eh ? "

At the sight of the wig, and expectation of the old governor's wrath, the enraged valet gave the unsuspecting dog a kick which might have broken his ribs ; and at the same moment a tremendous " D——d scoundrel ! " was vociferated from the open window, which fell like a thunder-clap into the room. In less than ten minutes Mr. Sharpe Lookout was on the road to seek another tutorship, and young Meadowlands was in a few weeks packed off to Eton.

At this school he found himself amongst a crowd of gentlemen's sons, all preparing for the University, and for fitting themselves to profit as much as possible by one another and the nation. There were elder sons and younger sons. The elder sons were all soon taught to look upon themselves as peculiar people—people who have a great figure to cut in the world with great estates, and to make the fortunes of younger sons with church-livings and state offices. Of course all the glories of tuft-hunting and aristocratic emulation were soon comprehended and commeneed here. The whole

tribe looked on themselves as born to run a race, the elder ones in rivalry in style and fashion, the younger in getting all they could of the good things that the elder ones and the nation had to bestow. As to the people—the great mass of the nation—of them they knew and cared nothing ; they never had come near such a vulgar race ; they never were likely to, except at elections. The Plebs—what were they to our golden youths ! *They* were educated for the good of the country ; just in that sense which the imperfect English of George II.'s German mistresses expressed when surrounded by the infuriated mob,—“ Good people, why are you so angry with us ? we are come for all your goods ! ” To which an unfeeling ragamuffin replied,—“ Ay, curse you, and all our chattels too ! ”

Mr. Woodcroft Meadowlands had enjoyed all the advantages of this admirable education, after which he had travelled.

And now Mr. Meadowlands arrived at the hall ; a fine, tall gentlemanly man. He was seen riding over the lands with the old steward ; and then he was seen riding over them again with a stranger. Mr. Meadowlands disappeared after this for a time, but the stranger reappeared with several assistants, and they were observed with consternation by the farmers. They were those creatures of the human hawk tribe, termed surveyors.

It was imagined that Mr. Meadowlands had grown enormously rich by the accumulations of his long minority, but those who thought so did not know the extravagancies of the golden youth of this age, nor had much knowledge of what goes on in the great national manufactories of the states-stewards. Mr. Meadowlands raised all his rents thirty per cent. Most of the leases, luckily for him, had run out. The old farmers, terrified at the advance, threw up their farms, and new ones flocked into them. The old steward retired, and a new lawyer-steward took his place. Hawks began to abound at Beecup.

With the new tenants came new machinery ; and it was soon found that to pay the thirty per cent. advance in rent, thirty per cent. of human labour must be dispensed with ; accordingly there were numerous dismissals of labourers and servant men. There were drills and tedding-machines, and

steam thrashing-machines, as busy as possible, saying as plainly as machinery can, "Good-bye to you, old labourers and hired men—you may retire." But whither were they to retire? In other parishes there were proprietors who had been to the same schools, made the same travels abroad, and the same advances at home. It was found out that men and women were rather nuisances in the country. They were told to withdraw, and seek work in the towns. Very good—but then, they were not accustomed to the work of towns. There are no turnips to hoe on the town pavements, nor crops to rear in the greenest squares.

The squire got married: he married an earl's daughter, and it was only fitting that he should keep up as much state as his wife had been used to. There were gay doings at the Hall, and the driving about of abundance of fine carriages and fine people. What a vast improvement there was! The parish before only maintained very common, poor, drudging people; now it abounded with very rich and grand people indeed.

The squire began to make other improvements. There was found to be a very idle population. It was quite right that it should disperse, and seek employment where it was to be found. The Methodists were forbidden to come into the village; their barn was taken away by the new farmer, and the squire issued orders that they should not hold any meetings in the parish. They met, therefore, on Sundays, in the open air, on a common just beyond the boundaries. This was insolent and contumacious. The steward attended this meeting with a gamekeeper, and from him learned the names of such labourers as were present. Every one of these was the next week dismissed by the farmer who had employed them; they had notice to quit their cottages, and the green was soon *improved* by several of them being pulled down, and the ground thrown into the next field.

But there was now found to be a number of families out of work, who demanded to be maintained by the parish; they were told that the parish had joined the neighbouring Union, and there they must go if they wanted relief. Not liking this proposal, these families dispersed through the country, and some got work, and some starved and came to the Union at last.

Amongst the families marked for expulsion was that of James Meldrum; he had contumaciously attended the Methodist meetings to the last. But it happened that Meldrum's employer was almost the only farmer who had remained of the old set. He had got three years of his lease to run, and had escaped the advance. He was a man of the old sturdy school, and looked with indignation at the squandering of his old friends and neighbours, and for that very reason determined to stand his own ground to the last. Meldrum's cottage was on his farm, and, therefore, it still stood, and Meldrum was still employed, spite of religious doggedness.

But if the blow did not reach him one way it did another. His shop was ruined! The bulk of the poor people were expelled from the parish, and the farmers supplied themselves at market. They dared not purchase at his shop, if they had been so inclined. They dared not even sell Mrs. Meldrum an egg, or a pound of butter. There was an end of the shop.

But that was not all. Job and Sampson, the two sons, who had been in service on one of the farms, were dismissed, and after seeking employment in vain all round the country, went off to Reading to seek it there. Dinah, the daughter, was in the same predicament. She lost her place, and went to seek one in Reading.

From day to day did these young people go to and fro, but for some time in vain, and at night returned home to lodge; it was a melancholy meeting of parents and children. The profits of the shop were gone—the wages and support of the young people were gone; it began to press hard on the Meldrums. What made it harder to bear was, that all their religious friends and comforts were banished. There was no meeting, no love-feast, no class as before; they were solitary, and would be glad to be away if they knew where to go. At length the two sons got employment in Reading, one with a butcher, and the other in the stables of an inn; and Dinah soon after took service with a milliner, as servant of all work. This was a relief, but the ruin of her shop, the dispersion of her religious friends, to whom Mrs. Meldrum was extremely attached, had made an impression on her mind that nothing seemed to remove. She sunk into a deep

listless melancholy, and at length shut up the shop to which nobody came, and, as if her life depended on it, sunk rapidly in strength, and in a few months died.

Here, then, was James Meldrum left alone in his house. For a man of a sanguine, moody, brooding temperament, like his, it was enough to have turned his brain. But this catastrophe was spared him by his employer. "Meldrum," said he, "you have no occasion for that house and garden, it is much too large for you, and I want it for my waggoner, whose cottage must come down, as it is not on my farm; I am sorry, but you must look out."

Meldrum looked out, but he could find no place where any one could, or dared if he could, give him a lodging. He too was obliged to retire to Reading. Here he was not so lucky as his children; work for him was not to be found. There were scores of labourers and their families driven out of the country to seek refuge in the town, and every job in the place was engaged by younger hands. His old employer had said to him, "I'll still give you work, Meldrum, if you can't get it elsewhere, because you've worked for me so long." So behold James Meldrum now established in lodgings in Reading, with his two sons, and daily marching, in his fifty-seventh year, seven miles and a-half to his labour, and back again; that is, fifteen miles per day, or ninety miles per week of walking, besides his daily labour.

Thus, then, were James Meldrum and his children thoroughly disinherited from their ancient place of abode, their old homestead, their old field of labour and livelihood, by the progress of modern social-economy. The depopulating policy had taken effect in Beecup, and reduced the amount of human labour to the most exact minimum. Meldrum, it was true, had still the offer of work from his old employer the farmer, but it was at the cost of walking ninety miles a week, besides doing his ordinary day's labour. To Meldrum it appeared at his age, fifty-seven, to be impossible. He therefore thanked his old master, and told him he would endeavour to get a job at or nearer to Reading. Behold him, therefore, in Reading. Here his son Job was with a butcher, his son Sampson assistant hostler at an inn stables, and Dinah, who had been maid of all work at a milliner's, was now keeping her brother's house, and doing plain sew-

ing for her old mistress. Meldrum found his children were all therefore employed, and more or less paid for their work. The sons had fifteen shillings each, and the daughter could, besides cooking their meals, earn, by hard exertion, three shillings a week. Thirty-three shillings for three, and now there would be the wages of four, that was a paradise, compared to what scores of other labourers were undergoing. The Meldrums had two rooms in an upper story, in one of which the father and sons slept, and the daughter in the other, that in which they lived. For these two rooms they gave four shillings a week, or within two shillings of ten guineas a year! For their house and garden at Beecup they had paid thirty shillings! This new home, however, was in a low, narrow, and damp street, of which the drainage was bad, and in which the number of poor and dirty people crowded together was excessive. Many labourers there were who had no other resource but their own wages; those wages, for which they had, besides their labour, to walk their five, ten, and even twelve miles a day, were about seven shillings a week. It is true that they could apply to the parish for additional assistance, and many did so apply, but in every case it was refused. They were told that if they could not get work they must come into the Union. To this many preferred any suffering. Others, who said they would come in, were cross-questioned as to where they had been last working. Application was made to their old employers, and when it was found that they were still willing to give the same employment, though at eight or ten miles distant, the labourers were told to go there, and were refused an entrance to the Union.

By these means numbers of these rural families were here subsisting on six and seven shillings a week. The consequence was, that they were compelled to herd—that is the only term for it—together in the most dismal crowds, and under the most demoralizing circumstances, in the worst houses of the worst lanes and alleys of the town. Here there were throngs huddled together in the most dismal condition of filth and wretchedness, lodging in the same apartments, and diffusing from one to another the most desolating principles and habits. The children ranged the country with matches, and such pretences of merchandize,

but merely to beg and steal. The young women were exposed to the worst influences, and led to the worst crimes. The mothers, steeped in wretchedness, resorted to the gin-shop, and became, instead of comforts, miserable examples to their families.

But what are we talking of?—Families! They had no families. They belonged only to the herd of human outcasts, where all family comfort, privacy, or domestic feeling were annihilated by the necessity of herding with the mass of festering penury and vice—the out-sweepings of society—the common dunghill of mankind.

Compared with these, the Meldrums found a princely home. Two rooms to themselves, at four shillings per week, and three-and-thirty shillings coming in. But Meldrum could obtain nothing to do. His sons tried, and he spent a week in trying, first the town and then the country round: it was all in vain. Every hole in the fox-and-goose-board of life was supplied with its peg. James Meldrum could not bear to be idle and live on the earnings of his children; he therefore once more turned his steps to Beecup, and implored work of his old master. He was brought to bear the idea of twelve hours' labour per day, and five hours' walking to it, that is seventeen hours' labour per day for nine shillings a-week. He had a home, that was something; with his children, that was more; and with the assistance of their earnings that was more still. He just had a peep into some of the human hovels near his own lodgings, and that gave him a shock that made his own hardships real luxuries. He was humbled not a step or two, but a whole flight of steps: he was a sadder, if not a wiser man.

Well, James Meldrum asked work of his old master again. “Odds bobs! James,” said the old farmer, “I’ve filled up thy place, man. What’s to be done?”

But luckily the harvest was coming on; extra hands would be wanted, and so James might come: still, he was told that such was the scarcity of work that wages were dropped, and he could not give him above seven shillings a-week, and ninety miles to walk for it! James shook his head: what was the English labourer come to! But there was no help; he had tried everywhere else; he had seen some sights in the town;—and he accepted it.

Behold James Meldrum, then, walking off every morning to his day's work. Two hours and a half it required to reach Beecup, for his limbs were stiff with rheumatism, with being exposed to wet and cold out at his labour: he was obliged, therefore, to start at half-past four o'clock in the morning, in order to be on the ground at seven: he did not leave till seven, and often later, and therefore was not home till half-past nine or ten at night: tired as a dog, he got his supper and went to bed to be up at four, allowing six hours for sleep. See the old man in his smock frock and ankle boots stiffly stalking along the way in the morning, his thin and sombre face wearing an air of deep melancholy: see him sitting under a hedge, eating his dinner of bread with a bottle of water to drink. You may imagine that many a sad and bitter thought passed through his mind in such moments; of all his past enjoyments at Beecup; his good, kind wife, his happy children, his friends, and Methodist affairs. Many a deep groan did these memories bring up when no one was near; and a child that was once looking between the bars of a gate, as he sat at his dinner, and heard him thus groan, was dreadfully frightened; but still more when she saw him draw his knife across his throat as if he would kill himself, but then shake his head and mutter something to himself.

But these, after all, were golden days compared with those of some of his fellow-labourers, or those which were to come: the weather was still fine, the days tolerably long. As he came in the morning the dew hung on the leaves and the birds sang: the sun came up laughing broadly, as if he knew no care, and therefore thought everybody ought to be merry. Through the heart of James Meldrum these influences found a way, but it was as a sheep finds its way through a wood, leaving all its wool behind it on the thorns. He felt that the world *ought* to be happy, but he knew that it did not make him so: he groaned, and went on.

Still the days were fine, the roads dry; there was at home a supper and rest; but the harvest went over: the days grew short, the weather became rainy, the roads foul. He went in the dark and returned in the dark: he began to find, too, that his frame was exhausted: he grew slow in his work, and would often drop asleep over it: on more

than one occasion his master had found him in this condition—not laid down, but actually standing propped on his spade or fork, and sleeping.

“This won’t do, James!” said the farmer, and shook his head. The next thing would be dismissal. Meldrum was alarmed at this, and thought if he could only get rid of going every day home, it would save his strength. But where was he to lodge? Out of his wages he could not afford it. He at length asked leave to sleep on the hay in the stable chamber, and it was allowed. Here with a horsecloth or two thrown over him he lay, without putting off his clothes; got some milk to his bread from the farm-house for breakfast, and dined on bread and cheese; once a-week only he went home, and had a Sunday’s wash and shave; but this plan did not answer. His rheumatism grew intolerably with this mode of life. Never sleeping in a bed, never shifting his clothes except once a week: he was chilly, sluggish, and racked with pains all over him. He was compelled to resume his old walk daily to and fro. Through darkness and rain, and storm, and dirt, did he, night and morning, plod his slow and weary way, and often went to his work for the day wet through. No wonder that the farmer began to say that he thought it would be a kindness to him to dismiss him—absolutely refuse him employment, and let him get parish relief. Against this, however, poor Meldrum begged hard; and so it wore on.

But, in the meantime, matters at home were undergoing a rapid and fatal change. Since the time of quitting Beecup there had been an end of attendance at the Methodist meetings. Meldrum himself was too much tired and worn out to go to any meeting: on Sunday he sat and slept; and his sons treated the idea of going to chapel with contempt: they were grown, what are called amongst their class, jolly fellows: they protested that the Methodists had never cared for anything but what they could get out of them. The ministers, since their misfortune, had never come near them. “No,” said these youths, “we have no snug beds and snug suppers to offer them.” They seldom, he found, came home to dinner, but dined at a public-house near where they worked, with a number of their own kind. They brought, of course, little money home, and often appeared pretty full of liquor

when they came at night : that was often late, sometimes not at all. They were evidently grown wild fellows,—Meldrum heard it said so. But when he ventured to talk to them, they cut him off short with “Stuff, father, we mean to enjoy life while we can. What good does any humdrum religion, and the like, do anyone? Has it done us or you any good, eh? It is all stuff and nonsense ; nobody of any sense believes it now. It is only invented to keep poor folks quiet.

If poor Meldrum was shocked, it was of no use : he only sighed, and became more close and quiet than ever.

On the other hand, Dinah continued to dress very gaily, and was as off-hand in her defence of it as her brothers ; she was resolved to “live while she could,” as she called it. Often when James came home at night he found Dinah reading. Sometimes her brothers were in, and she read aloud ; but what they read he scarcely knew, for he became so drowsy on entering the house, that he could but just keep his eyes open while he got his supper, and then fell asleep in his chair. Then, as he woke up, he would often hear the same humming tone of one reading, and would catch a sentence or two of what appeared some “high-flown tale,” as he rubbed his eyes and staggered off to bed.

But one Sunday he saw a quantity of those cheap publications, with which the little bookshops abound, lying about, and he took up first one and then another, and read. They were stories of the most inflated and extravagant kind, of lords and ladies, and thieves, and people with the most romantic names and startling actions imaginable : murder, seduction, contempt of everything sacred, crime and dissipation of every possible kind, were dressed up in a fashion which would disgust and shock the refined and the virtuous, but which only stimulated the mind already debased. “Varney the Vampire, or the Feast of Blood ;” “The Murder at the Old Ferry ;” “The Hangman’s Daughter ;” “The Illuminated Dagger ;” “Prince Morio and the Fair Vatilde ;” “Seduction ;” “The Love Child ;” “The Wife’s Tragedy ;” “Mantel ;” “The Ordeal by Touch ;” “The Rivals, or the Spectre of the Hall ;” “The Old House of West Street ;” &c., &c., and numbers of the like relations, all illustrated by engravings of the most atrocious character,

were the staple of this literature which is poured in myriads of sheets on the devoted heads of the poor and ignorant. To these were added cheap reprints of infidel writers, in which religion was represented as a mere state invention to feed priests and frighten people into submission. There were halfpenny "murder sheets," detailing all the most revolting murders as they every week occurred, and every species of vileness, villany, and horror, in pennyworths and half-pennyworths.

What was the effect on the mind of Meldrum? At one time he would have taken the whole mass of pollution and thrust it into the fire; but James Meldrum did not do so now. For a moment he appeared surprised; then stunned; then he took up another and another, and a new and wild appetite seemed to seize on him: strange and dark thoughts had passed through the mind of James Meldrum as he plodded along the road to and from his labour in wind, and rain, and darkness. Strange and dark thoughts—darker than the night, stronger than the wind, more chilling than the rain—not only passed through his mind, but remained in it, and brooded there like evil spirits that had found a roomy and congenial home. He went back over all his life: he saw how everything that was dear to him, and which had been taught him as sacred, had been trodden on by the powerful: he had prayed to God daily, hourly, at noon and at midnight—and he had been taught that prayer would be heard: he had read the declaration of the Psalmist, that "He never saw the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread;" he had hung on the assurance that "the tender mercies of God were over all his works;" "that he who sought should find; who asked, should have given to him; who knocked, to him it should be opened." And he had believed, had hoped, had trusted, had sought, had asked, had knocked, and, as it seemed to him, in vain. The mighty of the earth had arisen and broken up his home and his place of rest; had dispersed his friends, and driven himself forth; had broken his wife's heart, and led his children into temptation and, he feared, crime. What had been done to him had been done, and was doing, to thousands. Oppression abounded and was prosperous. Men called on God, and there appeared no answer. Luxury and unfeeling haughty-

ness increased on the one hand, and poverty, and crime, and despair on the other. Christ had said,—“ Woe to him that grinds the face of the poor ;” but the Government passed a poor-law, whose every principle was to grind their faces to the bone, and make their poverty bitter to them. There was an enormous machinery for religion, costing the nation ten millions a-year, and its only production appeared to be archbishops and bishops in palaces and fine carriages, and curates in poverty and threadbare coats. The loving and tender, the soothing and inviting, the equalizing and fraternizing tone of the religion of Christ, was not the tone of this national religion. There appeared in church and state, in all ranks and classes, one huge mockery abroad : and beneath this crushing thought the simple brain of poor Meldrum gave way, and was filled through and through with the deadliest despair.

To this tone of mind the compositions which he now laid his hands upon were like fire thrown into stubble. A dreadful truth seemed every moment to acquire a more appalling evidence : and that truth was, that the world, God, and Christianity, were a dream and a delusion. He was told there how many of the finest intellects had arrived at this conclusion, and bade to look round the world and on all its doings, and see whether they did not confirm it. Poor Meldrum *had* looked round there too long, and his own experience gave a force to these baneful writings, that made him start up in an agony and plunge into the darkness of the night. It was, as we have said, Sunday : the lights were bright in the Methodist chapel as he passed down the street, and he hurried on with the feeling in his soul that the people there assembled were but the poor dupes of a flattering, fair, but groundless faith.

He rushed on past chapel and church, and burning wayside gaslight, into the pitch darkness of the country. A tempest was without, and a still worse tempest within. No man, not the most miserable, gives up the hope of immortality and the faith in God, in heaven, and the eternal reality of love, without a pang that rends the very foundations of his nature. It is the first and most cruel death, to which the second death is but an opiate stupor, a dull and drugged sleep.

And who are they who inflict this living death? Who are they who are the real disseminators of infidelity and atheism on earth? They are the false priests who establish a false religion, and give it the name of the true. They are the false law-givers who establish laws in opposition to the nature, attributes, and revelations of God, and teach God's sanction for them. They are the wealthy, who profess faith in the religion of brotherly love, and, rolling in luxury, disdain the miseries of the poor. They are the proud, whose life and prosperity are a deadly lie to the simple souls who read that God is no respecter of persons. They are unnatural brothers, who read their Bibles at breakfast, and go duly to church and chapel, and yet would not stretch out a little finger to save the sons of their own mother from destruction. They are all those who, professing to believe in Holy Writ and holy life, who, denouncing the irreligious, the destruction of established order, are themselves dead to every genuine impulse of christian love, and barren of every thought and action that diminishes the sufferings and extends the knowledge and comforts of their fellow-men. These are the true originators of infidelity and atheism. In vain would men write and speak against the truth of the Gospel and the immortality of man, if the utter opposition of the spirit and lives of these men to the sacred faith that they profess did not instil into the minds of the simple a deadly seed of doubt, and their oppressors crush it into their souls with the ponderous roller of contempt.

Meldrum rushed on. The drenching rain fell. He felt it not. The lightning cut vividly across his path, the thunder roared and growled in heaven; but the awe which these things had once inspired had ceased; he regarded them but as the blind play of blind and undirected elements. They were to him emptied of their terrors—for they could only kill him, and he desired only to die and sleep.

In the midst of the deluge and the darkness there came a roar of terrene thunder. There was the glare of dazzling lights, the clatter of scores of iron wheels, and the next minute Meldrum saw the carriages of the comfortable rush past, and the pomp of science—like a hurricane in the midst of the hurricane—flash by and leave the darkness all to himself.

The sense of the immense diversity of the fates of men fell on the labourer who stood on the highway the victim of devouring self-contempt, and he muttered to himself,—“ And these proud works, too, and they who made them, and they who thus enjoy them, are but dust!” Far that night did Meldrum hasten on over field and moorland—careless of everything but to flee from the agony which wrung his sensitive soul, pondering on the means of putting out this spark of life, which was, according to his new doctrine, but a momentary spark, giving the otherwise insensible dust a capacity for intolerable suffering. But as the day dawned, the fierceness of the paroxysm passed away. He sank exhausted on the ground, and after a heavy sleep awoke low and laden with despair. He turned his steps in the direction of the scene of his daily labour, and there toiled out his allotted hours.

From that day Meldrum was another man. The new faith had expelled the old. He regarded himself but as the work of chance, and the only object in life worth considering, how he was to get through it with the least discomfort to himself. Every principle which is based on the self-respect of the believing soul was gone; every ennobling sentiment was extinguished. Amongst the many atoms on earth to steer his own atomic organization as clearly along as possible, was his soul’s sole aim. He was gloomier, more reserved than ever, and he devoured the fatal literature which he had now become acquainted with as he swallowed the glass of gin to give to the hour its cordial and absorbing stimulant.

Miserable, yet mechanically, Meldrum still trudged on duly to his daily work. He performed his ninety miles per week; his seventeen hours per day of labour for his seven shillings—because he had yet no other resource; but his mind was busy at work during the time that he walked and the time that he wielded the flail on means to come at the necessary sum more easily. All the old restraints of conscience, of respect to law and property, were gone. What, said he to himself, had God or man done for him? Was he not as wretched as he could be? What was property but a means of keeping him out of what he needed? He recognized no God, and, therefore, he could recognize no

law.. There was poaching, and there was theft. They were disgraceful,—that was the cunning effect of cunning maxims fixed on society,—they were punishable. Could he be worse punished than he was? He wished to quit his present enormous labour, and find some easier way to all he needed. His master prevented him, by saying that for the rest of the winter he should not again need him. He set out home-wards on the Saturday night without a prospect of a day's labour for four months to come ; and he vowed within himself to work no more.

The world was all before him where to choose ;
Necessity his guide.

CHAPTER III.

A MIDNIGHT GATHERING WHICH BRINGS MELDRUM ACQUAINTED WITH BATES AND CAPTAIN CRICK.

IN the course of the following week there was to be held one of those meetings of the peasantry which at one time reported in the newspapers made so deep an impression on the public mind. It was at some eighteen miles distance, but Meldrum had nothing else to do, and he resolved to be there.

The day arrived, and Meldrum set out across the country to attend this gathering of the rural agitators. It was towards the end of November, and the weather was as gloomy as Meldrum's own mind. The meeting was to be held on a moorland equidistant from several farming villages, and at eight o'clock, so as to allow of such as had work arriving after their day's labour. When Meldrum came upon the scene of action it was, of course, and had been long, pitch dark. His steps were, however, directed by the light of a fire which flickered on the dense mass of vapour in the sky, and was spread on it as on the roof of an oven. As he came upon the brow of a hill he beheld below him that it proceeded from no fire, but from a number of torches, which blazed and flared in the wind, and the murmur of many voices struck upon his ear. This told him that a crowd was already collected, and he quickened his steps lest he should be too late to witness the whole of the proceedings.

Drawing near he could perceive a dense crowd of people and various groups in its outskirts, who appeared all earnestly in discourse, so that he comprehended that no public speaking was as yet going on. Every moment the scene and place assumed a more strange and wild aspect. The place was a deep hollow at the bottom of the moor, where a stream of some size ran across the highway, and where the highway itself became hemmed in between dense woods. The

spot seemed to have been chosen for its lying so as to attract by its lights as little notice as possible, and for the advantage of a lofty bank running on the side of the road under the edge of the wood, from which the speakers could address the throng. This throng now amounted to at least five or six hundred, and was every minute augmented by fresh numbers pouring in on all sides. With some of these Meldrum joined the skirts of the crowd, and was at once struck with the aspect of wretchedness which distinguished it. He had been accustomed to see the labouring classes of the country together at wakes, fairs, and statutes; but on these occasions they had come with good clothes on their backs and money in their pockets, and ready for a certain enjoyment of a gaiety clumsy enough but genuine. But such a thing as gaiety in a crowd like this would have looked frightful, for it would have been unnatural. Here were young men, with old, lean, though weather-beaten faces, and old men whose feeble limbs hardly bore them, though there was a fire in their eyes which showed that they had a keen feeling of the sufferings whose stress had thus brought out these rural toilers to complain of and to consult on their wrongs. There were women still more famine-wasted and worn, and not a few who bore along with them in their arms their infants, though their exhausted bosoms gave no means of stilling the cries of these melancholy little creatures—pilgrims through a world which received them at its entrance to an uncomprehended misery. There was many a huge and burly fellow who, well fed, would have vied with Hercules himself in clearing out the Augean or any other stable, and there were growing lads in whose meagre faces you looked in vain for the country freshness of former days. Every hand was supplied with a good sturdy cudgel, for the double purpose of walking-sticks and weapons of defence and offence if any danger arose. Their long frocks hid many a ragged garment, but poverty sat on every form and feature; and the women, who had not one common over-costume, like the men, showed the deplorableness of their penury still more. Their garments were thin and flimsy cottons, not the good old stuffs and flannel and quilted petticoats of their mothers' days. The spirit of English neatness seemed to have vanished with their better fortunes, and rent stockings

pulled on awry, and slipshod, and loose, and often toeless shoes, were everywhere to be seen. Some of these women sat on the damp ground, and endeavoured to rock their babies in their arms, while they listened to the relations of the troubles of the rest, or screeched out their own amid the deafening winds and the smoke of the torches. Meldrum could hear everywhere the words, "Starvation Wages," "Board of Guardians," "Union Workhouses," "Overseers with hearts of stone," and "Being sold up for rent." The murmur of the multitude became every moment louder—there was one general noise of undistinguishable tongues, amidst which the shrill voices of women rose here and there above the rest, and finally an impatience displayed itself for proceeding to business.

It was evident that the leaders were in the centre of the dense mass, where some discussion was going on which seemed to excite an eager attention. Voices began to resound here and there, calling out—"Begin! begin!" The shouts became louder and louder. There was a movement of the crowd near the wood-side, and presently a man was seen cutting out rude steps in the bank, up which he was followed by two or three other men, while a number rushed up on either side to this elevation, where it was more easy of access.

At this sight a deafening shout was raised by the throng; and before it had subsided, a countryman in the centre of the group waved his hat to command attention. This was soon given him. The crowd became as silent as the grave, and the countryman addressed them. Before he could do this, however, some in the crowd said, "That's Button of Scrimton!" "Who's he?" was the reply. "Why, Button the shop-keeper. He has made what he has by the poor man, and now he is not like a many, he is not ashamed to stand by him." "Bravo, Button! Bravo, Button!" resounded far and wide, and ended in a loud hurra.

The person thus described and thus hailed was a middle-sized man, in dark clothes of a country cut. He appeared fifty years of age, somewhat bow-legged, and stooping in the shoulders, which were broad and strong, and his countenance, with the hair combed straight over his forehead, had an expression of much homely shrewdness, and a twinkle in the eye which spoke rather of a close and knowing character

than of that open frankness which you would have expected to see in a man who came forward as the advocate of the oppressed. But Button of Scrimton was a man who had made his way by hard plodding and rigid saving. He had a hard hand,—a hard though just mode of dealing. It was by no professions of greater liberality than others that he had won the confidence of the labourers and their families, but it was by boldly pronouncing his opinions of their ill-usage, while he refused to let them run into his debt. He would divide and subdivide to a farthing's-worth and half-farthing's-worth his articles, but would not credit. "It is no use,"—he would say,—“pretending to trust you, neighbours, to-day, what I know you cannot pay to-morrow. You have just so much a week and no more, and if you exceed that you have no means of paying it. It's hard enough, I confess ; but it would be harder still if I were to trust, for it would ruin me and not help you, and you might have some one in my place that would use you worse.”

The poor people knew this was only too true, and they put confidence in Button the shop-keeper because he was ready to assist them any time by his counsels ; and even in their moments of direst distress or illness would do a kindness that showed all the more in one of his dry and adhesive character. They had got him to come forward on this occasion as their chairman, and he did it all the more as he had no aristocratic customers to depend upon, no landlord to fear. He lived on his own small property.

The chair which Amos Button was to occupy was no other than a large stone, which with some difficulty had been hoisted on this bank. But now he stood and addressed the crowd in a homely style of oratory. He told them that he need not say what had called them together there,—it was their necessities. He need not describe what they were,—they all knew them but too well, they all felt them too keenly, and he could see them written but too plainly on their faces. Well, they were come to talk their grievances over, to tell one another their own tales of misery, and to consider whether there was any way of mending their condition. Before he stated what *he* considered the true remedy he would first hear what they had to say themselves.

On this he called first one and then another forward,

who had no doubt been selected during the previous discussion in the crowd. We need not follow these speakers in their details. They were such as some time ago were given us in the newspapers ; but the sight of the speakers themselves was the most eloquent. There were men, and women too, who stepped forward, whose haggard and half-clad persons raised in the crowd groans and murmurs of astonishment. They described their few shillings a week—the vain attempt to purchase with them half enough to eat, or to clothe themselves with. The men spoke of going to work hungry, and working with a ravenous craving and a sickening faintness upon them ; the women as suffering the same famine at home amid their craving children ; their sufferings in the winter from cold, especially at night, having nothing in them and little on them, of their children sinking at the breast for utter want, and of consumption sweeping off the growing.

The appearance of the speakers was but too terribly corroborative of the truth of their statements ; and any one standing on that elevation and casting his eyes over that crowd, now not less than a thousand in number, would have imagined that he saw not an assembly of human creatures but of wailing and ghostly apparitions. The wind swept the torch-flames over their heads and snatched away the volumes of black smoke, and their eyes gleamed with the glazy keenness of famine, as their faces were all fixed on the speaker at the moment.

As Meldrum had listened to the different speeches, and seen the different speakers each stamped with the unmistakeable characters of want and despair, he had pressed nearer and ever nearer ; and at once he sprang upon the rude steps cut by the labourer's spade in the bank, and presented himself to the crowd. Nobody knew him ; and the chairman was about to speak to him,—probably to tell him that some one else was before him,—but a single glance at Meldrum seemed to take from him the power of utterance. He gazed at him in evident wonder and curiosity, and the crowd by a universal movement seemed to partake of the feeling. Meldrum's features bore traces of the intense mental suffering he had lately undergone. His old drab suit, which had figured at many a Methodist meeting, un-

hidden by the labourer's frock, marked him out conspicuously from those about him,—but still more the dark fire that burned in his deep-set eyes, and the strong enthusiasm which was visible in every feature. He had felt, as he had listened, all his passion for public speaking come upon him. It seemed to him that nothing but the language of a soul so wrung and tortured as his was, could reach the root of the woe that the labouring population was enduring, and rouse them to some action that should strike terror into their oppressors.

"Neighbours and fellow sufferers!" he cried. "Who *are* you?" resounded at once from a stentorian voice in the crowd.

"Who am I? A stranger to you, but not a stranger to the evils that you endure. Who am I? that matters not. What I am, that I will tell you. I am a man who began life with the resolve to honour God and the King, to live honestly by my labour, and die with the consciousness of having not only helped myself but my neighbour, wherever I could."

"Bravo, old boy! go on!" shouted the same stentorian voice; and a clamour of applause followed from all sides.

"But," added Meldrum, "what man can live honestly in this country?" (Hear, hear! True, true!) "What man, I mean a working man, can live at all?" (Hear, hear!)

"Never did a man labour more hardly than I have laboured,—but like a thousand others of our class I have been expelled from my daily labour—my house pulled down—my family scattered to the winds—my wife thrust into her grave—myself flung an outcast into the unfeeling world." (Murmurs, groans, and indignation in the crowd. A woman's voice, "Poor man! he's gone through Jordan, like the rest of us.")

"But, my friends," continued Meldrum, growing visibly excited, "what boots it to come hither to complain? Why come hither to tell our griefs and our oppressions to the woods and forests? They must be told on the hills and housetops. They must be published in the town-streets and the market-places,—before the rich and the mighty." (Immense sensation, and clamorous outcries.) We must make our miseries felt as well as heard of. You have met

before and told one another your sufferings--as if you did not know them well enough without ; as if they did not sit in your hearts like devils, and twine about your vitals like snakes, and sting you in the cries of your children, in their fevers and their deaths, like scorpions. They are stamped into your frames with the mallets of cruelty. They are trodden into your sides by the heels of the rich and well-fed. What boots it, then, to complain ? What good does it do to meet ?"

"What good ?" screamed a shrill voice from the crowd ; "it gets into the newspapers ; it gets to the ears of the members of parliament, and of everybody."

Meldrum paused a moment at this remark, and folded his arms with a look of ineffable sarcasm, as he slowly, and in a deep voice, repeated—"It gets into the newspapers—to the ears of members of parliament—to those of everybody ! And what better are you for that? what has *this* done for you ? Of the newspapers it has probably sold some additional quires—it has made a nine days' wonder to the reader, and it has passed. What then ? has it brought you a tittle of alleviation ? has it brought you an additional loaf ? If it has, let me see it. Has it induced one farmer or one gentleman to raise your wages one single shilling a week, or drop your rents one single shilling a year ? If so, let me hear it. Has it induced a single member of parliament to advocate your cause ?

"Yes, several," cried a voice.

"Well, several ; and what result ? a nine days' wonder in parliament, and a parliamentary result, just—nothing. Has the voice of an isolated man of feeling in the house carried it to the ears of anybody out of the house—excited *anybody* to regard your sufferings any the more ?"

Here there was again a violent sensation and conversation in the crowd, and many voices crying, "No, no,—it is only too true. The man speaks truth!"

"You still suffer, and suffer unheeded. The press, the parliament, the ministers, the Queen, all the wealthy aristocracy, whose lands you till, and whose tables you supply with luxuries—all the wealthy farmers throughout the United Kingdom—*everybody* knows your miseries and cares nothing for them. You are cared for as much as the rocks and the

sands of the land you live in. You are cared for less than the cattle, because they cannot sell and eat you. You toil, and are not paid; you pine and perish, and see your wives and children perish before you, and the world cares nothing for you; and yet you would tell the world once more the hopeless tale!

"My friends, it is time to act: it is time to speak in the only language that the hard-hearted oppressor will listen to. You have addressed yourselves to his compassion: he has none. You must now address that feeling which he has—his fear! Tillers of the soil! you live in a land of plenty, why not eat? Men possessed of arms and hands! why not make yourselves respected? Behold around you, and around you from sea to sea, stand the halls of the oppressor, and the ample ricks of the farmer, and the cattle and the sheep of ten thousand pastures. Why, then, languish? why then die? Up, and kill and eat, and, if need be, fling fire into the stores and houses of the oppressor, and strike into his soul the terror which is more availing than any supplication."

(Here there was extraordinary confusion. Groans and cries of "No, no! Off with him! He's an incendiary! He's a spy!"

"Spy!—incendiary!" exclaimed Meldrum; I am a man, and not a stone. I am torn with the pincers of cruelty, cut to the quick by the knives of the unfeeling. I know that they will tell you that this conduct is odious; but is not their conduct odious? Is it more criminal to seize food, and expel your oppressors from the earth by fire, than it is for them to deprive you of food, and expel you from the earth by famine? Away with names! away with cant! Be men, and you shall flourish—be slaves, and perish; as ye will by piecemeal! waste into the ground as a snow wreath wastes."

But at this point of Meldrum's desperate harangue there was a simultaneous movement of many persons towards the platform, if so it may be called, the platform of nature's own raising; and a person shouted into Meldrum's ear, "Off! plunge into the wood or you are lost! plunge into the wood! the police are upon you—off!"

But Meldrum stood firm, and turning his head, said to the

person who gave this advice, “No, I am no coward! let them come!—let them do their worst!”

“Off man! I tell you, off! save yourself for the future: you are such as are wanted;” and with this he gave him a push towards the wood. Whether the flattery which this last sentence contained had its effect we know not, but the next moment Meldrum and his unknown adviser were plunging through the thickets of the wood with the desperation of men who flee for their lives.

Meantime, the police, who had attended in great numbers, disguised in labourers’ frocks, had drawn their truncheons, and pushed vigorously up the bank towards the place where Meldrum had been standing, but, before they could reach it, he had disappeared. There was a cry of “Seize him! pursue him! make sure of the incendiary!” And at this moment one of the policemen fired a pistol in the air, and at the same instant a bugle sounded in the wood near, and a troop of cavalry, which had been stationed in ambush, galloped forth, and charged on the crowd.

At this sight there was a wild shrieking and alarm, and the multitude began to fly across the waste. In an instant every torch was extinguished, and the pitch darkness which ensued,—the shrieks of flying women and children, the curses of enraged men, and the swearing of the rural soldiery,—produced a confusion and a scene of terror inconceivable. The terror, however, was more in the sound than in the reality; for the Egyptian darkness, and some tremendous stones from the hands of the most determined of the labourer crew, caused the captain of cavalry to cry a halt, and allow the people to take themselves off; which they did in a wonderfully quick time through the darkness.

Meanwhile, Meldrum and his unknown companion, after pausing a moment to listen to the shrieks and clamour, the galloping of the horse, the ominous sound of the pistol and the answering bugle, perceiving the hubbub to subside, threaded their way as best they might through the intricacy of the wood. This was no easy matter, for the underwood was thick, and at every step some briar tore their hands or their clothes—some stump caused them to stumble, or some stray bough lashed them in their faces. To Meldrum, however, this was little compared to the remorseful anguish which

was torturing his mind. He felt as if he had called on the people to rush into the very heart of peril, and then fled like a coward. It was not that he had excited them to fire, kill, and eat,—for these things, in his now misguided and exasperated state of mind, he regarded as perfectly justifiable, and, in fact, as the only means of compelling attention to the dreadful condition of the people,—but the idea of recommending this, and exposing others to its consequences,—for, besides his, there was no language used which could expose the assembly to the vengeance of the law, and at the same moment flying himself, or rather sneaking away,—was intolerable. It was in vain that he called to his aid his new creed of infidelity; that he said to himself “we are all mere worms, moving pillars of mud; it matters not, we shall writhe out our little portion of torment, and be gone;” it was in vain that he asked himself “of what consequence it was whether he had acted well or ill, creditably or shamefully; that the fact could not be known over many miles, or remembered many days; that a man like him was lost in the obscurity of the crowd; and when he slept in his grave it was of no importance what had happened to him in his uneasy dream of existence?” Over all this sophistry of self-contempt, through all this logic of annihilation, rose that still small voice of God which cares nothing for systems of belief and unbelief, but, fixed in the eternal roots of the heart, as in the magnificent machinery of the universe, asserts our immortality in spite of ourselves, and maintains the indestructible reality of virtue, truth, and honour.

Meldrum went silently in the track of his companion, who ploughed his way through the densest masses of brushwood, and over bogs and ditches, till they struck into an open riding, which led them to a gate on the opposite side of the wood to which they had entered. Here the stranger said in a low voice, “Aha! now I perceive where we are;” and advancing cautiously he crossed the gate to reconnoitre, and then telling Meldrum all was right, they struck across the country over hedge and ditch for a full mile, when they came out upon a highway.

All here appeared as still and deserted as possible. Not a straggler from the agricultural meeting, nor a policeman,

was to be seen or heard. The stranger began to stalk on at a good round rate.

"Is this the way to Reading?" demanded Meldrum. "To Reading!" replied the man: "God forbid! would you run into the lion's mouth? In that direction the Philistines are sure to be swarming. It would be impossible to enter the town before morning without being stopped and reconnoitered by the police, who will have been informed of what has passed upon the common yonder, by that cursed, devil's invention, the telegraph. No; we must make for safer and more obscure quarters. Come along!" Meldrum felt a repugnance to connect himself with a man of whom he knew nothing, and who might, for aught he could tell, be a spy ready to give him up for a reward. But the assurance of the fellow, that he could do as he pleased, but for himself he should lose no time in running to earth, at length determined Meldrum to follow, and away they hastened. Presently they turned out of the highway to the right into a narrow country lane, and after following this for some time, and then crossing several downs, they descended into a valley, and halted before a row of what appeared to Meldrum, in the obscurity of the early morning, very miserable houses. Here the stranger flung a handful of sand at an upper window: the casement was presently opened, and a rough masculine voice demanded who was there.

"Bates, and a friend!" was the reply. The window closed, the door soon afterwards opened, and Meldrum found himself in what appeared to be a public-house of none of the nicest aspect, and admitted by a man of almost gigantic build, with immense black whiskers, and with an eye that scrutinized Meldrum so keenly that it seemed to lay his very heart bare before him. His huge person, clad only in shirt and trowsers, appeared more colossal in its dimensions than it even was, and his nightcap covering his bushy head of jetty hair made his coal black whiskers the more striking.

"All snug, Bates, I reckon?" said the landlord.

"I should think so, old fellow!" replied Bates—for such was his name here at least—"but it will be snugger still when we have seen some supper and a good jorum of heavy wet."

"Breakfast, you mean, Joe," replied the landlord, as he thrust his bare feet into his shoes, which stood just under the oven, where he had pulled them off on going to bed, and proceeded to fetch out some bread, cold meat, and knives and plates.

While the two arrivers got their supper, the landlord, who had fixed himself opposite to Meldrum, and scrutinized his outward man very attentively, after first throwing an ironing blanket round himself, enquired where they had come from that evening, and received from Bates a circumstantial account of all that had taken place. As he related Meldrum's part in the business, the huge man cast still more searching glances at him, and, ejaculating only "The devil!" the three severally retired to their night's quarters.

This place, to which Meldrum's guide had conducted him, was not deserving the name of a village, nor of a hamlet, but rather of a rookery. It consisted of two rows of houses, one on each side of the road, facing each other. They were of a very ordinary description, erected without the slightest regard to the picturesque, being all of one height, and as plain and bald as architecture, or the want of it, could make them. They had evidently been at one time the speculation of some very prosaic soul; and why he should have set them down just here, where there was no apparent occasion for them, would require perhaps to call their proprietor up from the dead to inform us of. Around were naked downs, only traversed by a few shepherds, not one of whom took up his abode here. These two rows of mean houses, staring at each other eternally, as if in wonder at their own location, were impressed with the most palpable marks of poverty and rudeness. The windows were broken, and the missing panes supplied by old rags or hat crowns, or were pasted up with dirty paper. Before the doors were ash-heaps, and other accumulations of nuisance. There were children of a dirty exterior to be seen playing in the street, if so it might be called, and the whole denoted that the inhabitants were of a low stamp. In fact, for the last two hundred years Twigg's Houses had been the notorious resort of thieves, tramps, wandering potters, and still more nondescript population.

In the centre of one of the rows stood a public-house,

bearing no resemblance to village ale-houses in general, but rather to a London gin-shop. This was the abode of the proprietor of the whole—no other than the large-whiskered landlord, who admitted over-night Bates and Meldrum. This landlord and proprietor was well known by the name of Captain Crick. There was a mystery about the man, and an unquestionable cleverness. He came here ten years ago. Twigg's Houses were at that time almost deserted. The owner had absconded for debt. The creditor, whoever he was, for he did not appear to be the mortgagee, had found so much trouble in collecting his black-mail from the nomadic population, as to give up the task in despair. The thieves, beggars, tramps, potters, and the like, came and went at leisure. The public-house only was held by the creditor, and retained as a sort of security for his debt. Here the carriers of calves, fowls, eggs, butter, and such commodities, halted for the night, on their journey from the lower country towards London, and this kept up a considerable trade in cheap beds, beer, suppers, and hay and stable-room.

In this state of things Captain Crick one day arrived at the Inn, and staid there some days. He professed to be retiring from the sea-faring line of business, and to want to settle in a thoroughly country retirement. This place seemed to have peculiar charms for him—there is no accounting for tastes—and he very soon installed himself as master of the inn, and it was speedily rumoured that he had made out the retreat of the proprietor, and had purchased the premises. In fact, very soon Mrs. Crick made her appearance, and took upon herself the duties of landlady. Mrs. Crick was a woman of dimensions almost as Herculean as those of her husband. She was a handsome commanding woman, of that class which pretends to be nothing but what they are—fine animals of the human species—enjoying life in all the ordinary elements of life : having their own way very much, and exercising a strong will over all around them. Mrs. Crick took the whole management of the house, and Captain Crick of the rest of the houses. In her own sphere she ruled paramount—the Captain never appeared to wish even to interfere with her sway, and she on her part never interfered with that of the Captain. In his absence she

collected the rents, but never pretended to know anything about the affairs of the property.

This system had its conveniences : for Twigg's Houses, as we have said, were notorious all over the country for the character of their population, and were therefore not unfrequently honoured with the visits of police and constables, and sheriffs' officers. It was said, that not only were the people thieves, but that Captain Crick himself was the grand receiver of all their stolen goods. Many a time had the Captain been summoned before magistrates to give an account of his tenants when they were charged with thefts, and neglect of payment of poor-rates, and the like. But on all these occasions the Captain declined placing himself in the position either of a censor or patron of his tenants. All he knew, he declared, regarding them was, that they paid their rents. That was his only concern, and that he attended to. If it was a case of poor-rates, he would ask the parish authorities before the magistrates, why they did not collect their rates as he collected his rents, weekly. He protested that he lost little or nothing ; but he could not take upon him the parish business to collect the poor-rates, or to be guarantee for them.

"But the tenants are gone off without paying the rates," the magistrates would say ; "and therefore you must pay them."

"I beg your worships' pardon," would be the Captain's reply ; "but the rates were due when the people were there. The officers should have seized on the goods—it is their neglect—I have nothing to do with it."

The Captain knew the law, and stood by it, and it stood by him.

If it were a case of theft, the Captain pleaded ignorance—he did not concern himself with any doings of his tenants, except the paying of their rent. He never set himself up as a critic on the conduct of his neighbours, and he never would. God knew there was dishonesty and wickedness in *all ranks*, and let God himself judge it—he, Captain Crick, had enough to do without.

This the Captain said with peculiar emphasis, and shrugs of the shoulders and expressive looks. It was a hopeless case, and constables and overseers soon grew tired of bringing

the Captain to the justice-room only for him to make them look very simple, and ignorant of their own business.

But the Captain was said to be in reality the patron and receiver-general of the booty made by his tenants. If this were true, then the booty must have been of a kind very easily concealed ; for, defeated in all other respects, the police had made at least a score of searches by warrant of his premises, and invariably with the same success, that of finding—nothing.

On all these occasions the Captain was quite polite to them, and in his absence Mrs. Crick was equally so—saving that she gave them some sly cuts of the tongue, on their hunting of mares' nests, and suspicions of their honest neighbours, in which the Captain never indulged.

This had gone on for ten years. Twigg's Houses had still the character of a rookery of thieves, and Captain Crick of their receiver-general : yet never had the authorities on a single occasion been able to fix a charge on the Captain. There had been proved to have been some scores of thieves tenanting his houses, but then, what had the Captain to do with that ? It was his misfortune to have houses where it was not everybody that wanted them. He repeated it, he was no critic on anybody, *high or low* (this was given with a nod and a shrug)—let the police look as sharp after the people as he did.

Now we have been informed, however, though we publish it with caution, lest we should bring any unmerited stigma on the Captain, and act with less candour and fairness towards him than he did to the public—that is, setting ourselves up as critics on *his* conduct — that the Captain had in his back court a certain most ingeniously contrived little crane and pulley, by which any one in the secret could by pulling a bell in a certain place have a basket let down at certain hours of nocturnal darkness, in which they could deposit anything of value occupying a small space only ; and that the basket drawn up again would soon afterwards descend with a certain sum in it, the exchange for the goods. Now we have been informed that by this means a great exchange went on between the duly initiated and some **GREAT UNKNOWN**. The initiated brought their goods and received their money. From whom ? As the Captain would

say—Heaven knows! Neither the Captain nor any one else was ever seen in these transactions. There never was a living soul who could charge him or any one else with receiving stolen goods. He never entered on any occasion into any bargains of the kind, or discourse on such subjects. The police had looked in this back court, but they never found any such crane,—they only found the house well supplied with good capacious water-spouts descending from the roof. They had examined the house, and never found any stolen or suspicious goods. If they *were* received—what became of them? Let those answer who knew.

But we have again heard, that out of Captain Crick's attics you stepped on his roof, and there found yourself in a leaden gutter, between the front roof and the back roof, from which rose a wooden stage with steps up to it, from whence you could enjoy a splendid view over the country. The Captain was fond of a breezy look-out. On this stage, however, stood a bench, which, it has been whispered, turned upside down made a little bridge, and this bridge pushed across from the gutter of Captain Crick's house to a certain window in the end of the next house,—that of the Captain's trusty hostler,—gave a ready means of escape for either goods or persons; that in the hostler's attic this bridge again became a seat, and gave a speedy access to the Captain's roof when needed.

Now those who are too illiberal to follow the Captain's excellent system of not making themselves critics on their neighbours, declare, that as the stupid police never dreamed of examining at one and the same instant the houses of both Captain Crick and his hostler, it was by means of this bench, which was made

A double debt to pay,
A bridge by night, a simple bench by day,

that the Captain contrived to elude all detection of his illicit deeds. So said those who were ungenerous enough to be critics.

Well, for ten years had Captain Crick been lord and master of Twigg's Houses, and entertainer of all the carriers who, with fine flowery-painted wagons and peals of jingling bells, came daily up the country, laden with calves, butter,

eggs, cheese, hay, straw, and sundry other commodities out of the farming districts, to the railway station, where they now unloaded their live stock and more compressible articles, and left only the hay and straw bearers to proceed to London as in the olden time. These men passed the night here, and thus there might be generally seen a throng of wagons standing about the public-house at Twigg's Houses, and the bleating of calves and lambs was generally sonorously heard there. In the tap-room as sonorously sounded the voices of these smock-frocked and ankle-booted carriers, who thumped their pewter pots on the table before them as a sign for the barmaid to replenish them, while they sent up clouds of smoke from their pipes. In the midst of the settle, Captain Crick would generally be found in earnest conversation with them, and at night often amused them with the relation of his sea-adventures. When you saw him dressed in his best, with his huge frock-coat, his broad-brimmed fierce-looking hat turned up quite briskly at the sides, and his enormous black beard, you imagined that you saw some ferocious pirate or smuggler, that had boarded many a peaceful merchantman, and would sweep a score of such quiet people into the sea, as easily as he swept the flies off the table before him, when they came to sip the ale spilled by the carriers. But we don't want to be a critic on a man who was too magnanimous to be a critic on any one else. All we know is, that Captain Crick, ever and anon, disappeared on a journey into Cornwall to visit his aged mother ! All honour to his filial piety !

Well, here were Bates and Meldrum housed. They slept in the same room ; and early in the morning Bates commenced a conversation. He told Meldrum how delighted he was to find a man like him, who was prepared to rouse the country in the only way it could be roused. That the people were too tame, and would all perish of starvation without taking any means to help themselves. That Meldrum had hit the right nail on the head—the only way was to carry fire through the country, and compel those who had property at stake to have things altered, and give decent wages.

Meldrum, who had cooled down a good deal since the meeting last night, listened in silence and with strong

repugnance to this counsel, and when Bates had done expressed his doubts whether he had not gone too far in his speech: that unless the whole of the agricultural people were prepared for such a plan, it would bring destruction on the few that adopted it, and that he was grieved to think scores might be suffering now from his own act last night.

At this, Bates started up in bed, and casting a furious look of astonishment on Meldrum, said—

“What! are you a coward? What! are you afraid of doing what you have so strongly advised others to do? The devil! have I been taken in by you? Are you a pigeon-livered milksop, and not the man I took you for? Did you not say that cruelty and injustice, the same cruelty and injustice which was grinding every other working man to death, had convinced you that nothing but fire and terror would be of any use in getting justice? Mark me, my man, you must speak out; for I tell you, that either you show yourself all right and *jammock* (bold and honest,) or I will be the first to put the bull-dogs on your heels!”

Meldrum felt that he was committed. He had put himself into the power of a fellow of whom he knew nothing—and now he must go on, or be denounced at once to the law. For a moment a cold shiver went through him, and he cursed his folly for going to the meeting, and still more for accompanying this man here. But when he came to review his situation and his prospects, to reflect that no doubt a description of his person would be widely circulated amongst the police, and that he was a marked man, he felt that there was nothing for him but to give up tamely, or to carry out boldly the doctrine he had recommended: he resolved to do the latter, and told his companion so.

“That’s right, my man!” exclaimed Bates. “Then here goes for a grand campaign! We two, who have nothing to hope from the people of property, but everything to fear, will now make them know what it is to drive honest men to despair. They shall either relieve the miseries of the working people, or they shall know miseries themselves.”

A bond dreadful and devilish was now entered into by these two to destroy and lay waste, regardless of the merits or demerits of those on whom they committed their ravages—it was in their perverted minds sufficient that fear must

do the work which neither ordinary justice nor compassion, which neither law nor religion, had done. The icy indifference of the educated and wealthy had produced their natural fruits ; wrong and indifference towards them in the victims of their system, and the devil entering into the souls of the oppressed, made them regard themselves not as evil, but as patriots and saviours.

A mutual enquiry into each other's history here took place between the confederate incendiaries. They resolved to relate their whole lives to each other. We know the story of Meldrum ; let us now hear a few particulars of that of Bates.

CHAPTER IV.

BATES' STORY; AND THE BURIAL BY STEALTH.

"My name," said the man, "is not Bates, but James Jackson. In fact, I have been baptised by necessity with half a dozen names. I can boast as many titles as any rascally lord. James Jackson, alias Rambling Roby, alias Billy Bullivant, alias Grim Joe, alias Sampson Sly, alias Drummer Osborne, alias Joe Bates. If I were to tell you all the occasions on which I have been christened afresh, it would last us a week. Enough; in different parts of the country it would not be safe for a man to have some one of these names.

"Well, I was born at Bulwell, in Nottinghamshire. Were you ever there?"

"Never," replied Meldrum; "never was on that side London."

"Well, my father was a stockinger;—almost every body are stockingers there. Do you know what that is?" Meldrum confessed his ignorance.

"Well; a stockinger is a man or woman who makes stockings on a machine which they call a frame. He weaves them like a flat piece of cloth, and they are seamed by the women and children. This trade, you would think, must be a good one: every body wears stockings. You never see any body without stockings, except Irish and Scotch; and they only the women. Men wear stockings every where; women don't. I've often wondered why; for women and children's feet, one would think, are tenderer than men's feet. But never mind that; every body, except the Irish and Scotch women and children, wear stockings. The population is every where increasing, and stockings are only made in few districts; and yet the stocking trade is one of the worst in the world. What's the reason? It's machinery. I've heard it often said, and I've often read it in the

newspapers, that machinery is the blessing of this country ; that, without our machinery, we never could have stood out the last great war against all the world. Well, it may be a blessing to the country ; God knows ! for I don't ;—but I know that it's a curse to the people. Wherever there's machinery, the people are as poor as crows ; and as to the war, why, to my thinking, it had been better if they could not have stood it out. That was a curse to the poor, and remains a curse to the poor ; for it grinds them to death with the debt it has left. But they tell you again that the debt is a blessing. Well, it may be a blessing to those who get any thing by it ; but it's a confounded curse to the poor. ‘ How to the poor ? ’ say they. Why, let them be poor, and they'd soon know. The manufacturer sells his goods to the merchant, and the merchant sends them abroad. But abroad they live cheaper, and they begin and manufacture for themselves ; and the merchant abroad tells our merchant, that he can buy twenty or thirty per cent. cheaper of his own countrymen ; and, of course, our merchant must come down, or he can't sell. So he comes home and tells the manufacturer this ; and he says, you must afford your goods twenty or thirty per cent. cheaper. And the manufacturer, says ‘ How ? The raw material is *so* much, and the labour *so* much : we can't get the raw material cheaper, and if we reduce the labourer he can't live.’ ‘ That,’ says the merchant, ‘ is not my business, but yours : twenty per cent. lower, or I cannot buy.’ So the manufacturers lay their heads together, and say, ‘ The raw material we can't get cheaper, because our government takes no pains to encourage the growth of it in our colonies, and other countries are manufacturing ; and if we don't reduce the price, they will. Well, there's nothing for it but reducing the price of labour.’

“ Well, they reduce the price of the labour : they can't squeeze the foreign merchant, because he can get the goods elsewhere ; but they can squeeze the workman, because he can't get work elsewhere. And so he works at a starvation price—and why ? Because the debt lies on every thing, and has to be paid out of the taxes, and so makes every thing dear ; makes the poor man's bread, and the candle that he works by, and the house-rent, and every thing, dear.

His labour, therefore, must be dearer too, if he is to live ; but the manufacturer could not live if it were, because he is fast with the merchant, and the merchant with the foreigner. *That* end is fast, and so *this* end must give way. According to the old saying, ‘the weakest must go to the wall ;’ and so the poor workman goes to the wall. He is compelled to work, and to make more work than ever, so that the manufacturer may live, and the interest of the debt be paid.

“ So the debt grinds the poor man : he does not live, he only dies daily : he dies by inches. More work than ever is made, or the manufacturer and the merchant could not get a living out of the fraction of profit now left them. And this, people call the blessing of machinery and of the debt. Now I say, if it be a blessing, it is all on one side ; it is a devilish curse to the poor.

“ But they say, where one man used to live by manufacturing, thousands do now by means of machinery ; and so it is a blessing. Well, if they *did* live it *would be* a blessing ; but the devil take me if they do live ! The working manufacturers are neither half fed, nor half clothed : they are dragged to pieces for rent, taxes, and rates, and live in misery that is enough to drive them mad ; and yet they that ride in their carriages, and get up to eat and go to bed with full stomachs, talk of the blessings of machinery and the debt. God Almighty give them these blessings all to themselves !

“ Well,—I was born on Bulwell Common ; the son of a stockinger, and doomed to be a stockinger myself. I’ve heard people read out of books that when one trade is too full, people naturally go to another ; and they call that political economy and philosophy : but they that write such rascally nonsense ought to be hanged for it. When the Irish labourers get too many on the ground, why don’t they turn to something else ? When a stockinger has children, and knows that his trade won’t maintain them, why does not he put them to another ? Why, just because they can’t. The Irishman can’t manufacture land, and the waste land that God has already manufactured the aristocracy won’t either use themselves, or let him use ; and as to trade, there is none in his country, and so they live as long as they can,

and then die off like rotten sheep. And the stockinger does just the same : he and his children are made prisoners to their own trade by their poverty ; they'd be glad enough to get into another trade, but how ? All other trades are full, and it wants money for a man to put his son apprentice ; and that is just what the stockinger has not got. The moment his children can seam a hose they must seam, and earn a penny ; and the moment they can mount a frame they must do it, and get all they can to help. And so the numbers every day increase, though they know well enough that by this increase even the present starvation prices must decrease ; and so it has come to pass that the stockingers are eating one another, and when the horrible wretchedness is to end God knows, for I don't.

" Well, I was a stockinger's son ; I had better have been the devil's ten times, for he's a cunning piece of goods, and would have found me a good trade—made a lawyer, or a lord, or something of me ; but, as it was, I remember running about a stockinger's son, without shoes or stockings. I could have been very happy on Bulwell Common in the sunshine, in hunting birds' nests, and picking violets from under the hedges, or catching bullheads in the brook ; and these days are the only ones that I can remember that had any pleasure ;—only I was always so 'nation hungry. I was forced to sit at the house-end and seam till my fingers were sore, and wind cotton, while I saw the colt galloping on the common, and the lark singing in the sky ; and I wished I had been only a colt or a lark, and not have to seam or to wind, and to starve for ever. Water-gruel, and nettle-porridge, and a piece of bread now and then, were my diet. I heard my father and the rest talk of Luddites, who broke the frames, and broke into bakers' shops ; and I wished they might come that way ; for if the frames were broken, I saw clearly enough there could be neither seaming nor winding ;—and as for bakers' shops, when I passed them, and smelt the hot new bread—good Lord alive ! I would not have given a pin to go to heaven if I was not sure that there were bakers' shops there !

" But the Luddites never came, and I grew up into a great lad, and was set to work in the frame ; and was starved six days every week on water-gruel and a few potatoes, and

on Sundays lay in the sunshine in the fields, and ate raw turnips.

"My father died soon, starved and worked out. My mother and the younger children went to the workhouse. I staid in that house, and married."

"Married!" ejaculated Meldrum.

"Ay, married!" rejoined Bates. "Can't you tell why?"

"No; how should I? You could not maintain yourself."

"Nor ever hoped to do," said Bates: "was sure I never could do, if I worked my fingers to the bone. It was precisely for that reason that I got married. 'Population,' say the political economists—how often have I heard that read at our public house—'increases with the means of subsistence.' It's a lie! it increases with the want of it. Ireland is a proof of it; the manufacturing districts are another. Men must marry because they can't maintain themselves, and then they get a claim on the parish. At least it was so then. I knew that when I had a wife and two children I could go to the parish and demand relief: so I married.

"Now, what do you think we lived on, I and my wife? I got about seven shillings a week: out of which I paid two shillings for frame rent; then there was suet to stiffen the cotton, and candles, another shilling. Four shillings were left, and my wife got about a shilling a week by seaming. Five shillings a week; and of this two went for rent. The landlord came every Monday morning for it. Three shillings were left for two people—eighteen-pence a piece per week! Why, Meldrum, your labourers' wages are princely to that.

"But these were good times to what came after. I worked to a bag-hosier; but you don't know what a bag-hosier is. He is a man who, to avoid starvation himself, by hook or by crook gets a frame or two at first. He hires them of the hosier in the town, and re-lets them at a profit to his neighbours. So he gets along till he has perhaps all the frames in the village, his own or in his hire, let and re-let. The stockingers take in their work to him, and he pays them, and carries these stockings to the town, and sells them to the great hosiers there. He is the English middleman, and is called a bag-hosier, because he is often seen in the earlier part of his career carrying his goods in a bag on

his back to the town. But he soon gets beyond this, and sends them by the carrier ; then, perhaps, he gets his horse and gig ; and at last goes to the town, and becomes a great hosier and a great man himself. That is the history of scores who are now great and wealthy men, magistrates and mayors, and some of them parliament men.

" Well, I don't blame them for getting on,—every man should try to get on ; but I blame them for the means by which they often get on : they get on by tyranny and extortion. Once that they get the stockinger under their thumb, all is over with him. He rents his frame of the bag-hosier, and takes in his work to him. He gets a few shillings into his debt, and is at his mercy. Then begin the screw and the press to work, and squeeze and crush him ; then begin the systematic bullying and baiting and *docking*. Ah ! curse that word *docking* ! The horse is docked of his tail once in his life, but the stockinger is docked of his vitals every week of his existence.

" He goes in with his work : he has been in his frame sixteen hours a day all the week. It is Saturday night, and till he gets his wages his family is without fire, candle, or a mouthful of bread. He has been induced to work to the bag-hosier because he is on the spot ; and the poor stockinger, to whom time is inestimably precious, cannot afford to spend half a day, or a day, in going himself to the town. He enters the bag-hosier's house, and sits or stands ; there are a score of others. There he waits while one by one are called into the warehouse ; that is, the parlour. In goes every one in turn with a pale care-worn look, and a sad and anxious expression. The door is closed, and stern hard-sounding words are heard on the part of the hosier ; and, anon, out comes the poor man with a flushed look, and goes off with a shake of the head, and a—' God help us ! ' Your own turn comes. You go in ; the door is closed ; your stockings are taken. ' How many are there ? ' ' So many.' They are counted ; the hand is put down them ; they are stretched, held up to the light, weighed ;—and then begins the operation of commercial rack and thumb-screw.

" A thousand faults are found with the work. There are as many ravellings i' th' welts and toes as would stuff a bolster. There is a regular line of tuck-stitches hafe (half)

way down th' hose. You have doubled the weight o' th' cotton by suet or oil ; that is, by greasing it to make up for waste, and have thus embezzled half the cotton itself. You have put too few narrowings in, and narrowed by too many needles at a time. You've missed the presser, and have drawn th' course out. You've made cuts and let stitches down, and never stopped to mend 'em. You've made the work too slack by ten or a dozen nicks of a side. The seamer has missed th' *loop* and gone into th' *wale*. You've brought 'em in as damp as dish-clouts.

" During all these imputed defects the bagman makes your hose almost as slack as he describes them, by stretching them unmercifully as he shines them between himself and the candle. For every one of these defects there is a docking of the price ! You are told that there is no pleasing the hosiers at the warehouse now trade is so bad ; foreign goods are so cheap in the market ; there are so many hands out of work that nothing but the very best of work will go down ; and what is more, they can only give out so much this week, the stock on hand is so great.

" By the time this purgatory is gone through, the poor man has wasted half away in a perspiration of agony, and his wages have wasted away as fast. There is no help for it. If he complain, the answer is, ' Well, mend yourself ; get work somewhere else, and pay what you owe me. Will you do that ? Shall I stop that fifteen shillings ? eh ! What do you say ? ' What can the poor devil say ? He is only part of the machinery of a system that must follow the revolutions of the other wheels about him, or be smashed to atoms. He must do as all are doing—slave on, slave on, and die at last in the workhouse—or turn beggar, poacher, or thief. That is a nice picture of what war and aristocratic government, and the blessings of machinery, have brought us to. If any one doubt it, let him go and see.

" For my part, I endured it in the hope of two children and a claim on the parish. The two children came, and just as I was about to make my claim the law was altered, and the New Poor Law and the union stared me in the face. Here was a go ! But there was no help for it : I was now grown desperate. I resolved to go into the Union. Anything seemed better than the starvation and misery that I

endured. I applied, and was refused relief because I was in employ. I threw myself out of employ : no matter, I could have work : the bag-hosier offered it. I took his work, and determined to cut myself clear of this work that would not maintain me. I did it so ill that the hosier refused me any more. Now the parish was compelled to take me into the house ; but this was not done till I had been sent to and fro from the overseer to the guardians, and from the guardians to the overseer, till my patience was worn out and my family were nearly dead with hunger. At last we got in.

"It was at the time that the law was bran new, and the Whigs and their commissioners were fiery hot to carry it out to the letter. My wife went one way, the children went another, and I a third. I was turned amongst a lot of other stockingers, and we were set to work in frames ready prepared, and kept at it for twelve hours, and let out only in a small court surrounded by a high wall to walk. It is true that our food was much better than what we could get out of doors, but to be treated like so many cattle in a stall, fed and worked, kept shut up, and not allowed to see one's own flesh and blood,—that was more than could be endured long. But, besides this, to be called 'great hulking, idle fellows,' and insulted every time we ate with being told that we liked to eat that which we did not earn ; and to be dressed all in one pauper costume, and every few days to be stared at by the guardians and called to account for not working hard enough, and not doing the work well enough, and for not being contented to be separated from our families, and threatened with beating hemp and the house of correction for every word that we spoke in our own defence—Good Lord ! it was enough to drive a man mad. They told us they resolved, and were bound by the law, to make it bitter to us, and sure enough they did. I soon asked leave to go out and seek work, determined to live on raw cabbage and lodge in a hovel rather than to be cooped up and hectored over there. It was granted me. I sought work in Nottingham, and got a promise in a day or two, and till then got a job of breaking stones on the road. I then went back to tell my wife that I should come and fetch her out in a few days, but I was told by the master of the union that I must either take them away at once, or come in

myself. The one was not yet in my power, and the other I would not do. I returned to Nottingham, and the next day was seized by constables and carried before the magistrates on the charge of having left my wife chargeable to the parish, and gone off with the clothes of the parish on my back. It was declared a felony in me to have gone off with the parish property—that is, the clothes! Was the parish a felon too, for it had got my clothes? I asked the magistrate this, and he termed me insolent, and condemned me to three months hard labour in the house of correction at Southwell.

“Man alive! my blood was but poor and thin, but it boiled at this injustice. I would work and be independent of the parish, and it would not let me: it took my clothes to badge and ticket me as a pauper, and then branded me as a felon for having these pauper garments on my back when I sought work.

“I went to Southwell, and to the treadmill. My heart swelled within me at every turn of the wheel, and I vowed vengeance against the master of the union, the parish, the magistrates—everybody! I came out, but not before I had found others there ready to join me. There was a great poacher of Hucknal—a stockinger too. We retired to Bulwell and took each a house, and set up our frames as an excuse, but our resolve was to plunder the game in the woods of Papplewick, Annesley, and Newstead.

“For a while things went on gloriously. We found a ready market for our game in Nottingham, Mansfield, Derby, and Newark; but one night we were encountered by a band of keepers and watchers, and we fought with the fury of men who regarded each other with a hatred worse than that of enemies of different countries. They called us velveteen villains, the scum of the earth, thieves, and robbers; we looked on them as the base slaves of proud, monopolising oppressors. The poacher of Hucknal was knocked down by a pocket-flail, after he had shot one of the keepers and felled another with the butt-end of his gun. We fled; and there was no remaining any longer in the neighbourhood. I decamped, and reached first Leicester and then Northampton, changing my name at each place. Here I soon found fresh companions of the same kind, and we came to

the same conclusion of blows and murder. I was seized and imprisoned: I was condemned to transportation; but the night before we were removed from the jail I made my escape, and got down to the New Forest. Here awhile I herded with a gang of gipsies and deer-stealers. I heard that my wife had been put again into the Union, and had got her death by sleeping in a room of new erection not dry. The children were sent into Derbyshire to work in a mill.

"From that day I cursed the laws of the country, and those who administered them, as if their fellow-men were vermin to be crushed and destroyed. I am an Ishmaelite—my hand is against every man of that class, as every one of their hands is against me. They shall see that those they trample on can yet turn like the trodden serpent and sting."

By the time that Bates—for so we must call him—had ended his harangue, he had worked himself up into a perfect fit of livid fury: his face was pale and almost black with passion, his lips quivered, his eyes stared at the farther end of the ceiling, and his huge knotty stick, which he had snatched up from his bedside, he held aloft, and grasped with a fury that seemed to make every bone and muscle in his hand ready to burst from the skin. His long wild hair, his sandy whiskers, and unshorn chin, gave him a savage air; and Meldrum, who sympathized deeply in his story, looked on him as a man not only justified in his sentiments, but as ready to face any danger, or death itself, in his revenge.

Within a week from this time these two outcasts from society had inflicted evils upon it of the most terrible kind. They had made a round in Wiltshire and Hampshire, and had not only fired the ricks of five different farms, but consumed extensive covers of game and young plantations. The owners of these had done no personal evil to them; for the most part their property was insured, and the loss fell on others; but it was all as one to the perpetrators, they did it on principle—the principle of revenge, and of striking what they called a salutary terror into those who oppressed the labouring classes.

Returning from their expedition of destruction, with a

hue and cry after them, with the reward of thousands set upon their heads, and shrinking from the light of day, they concealed themselves in a wood near an obscure village, not far from the scene of the great agricultural meeting. Pressed by hunger, they approached the village in the dusk of the evening to obtain some bread. The first houses which they reached were a row of tenements of only one story, in a damp and cheerless lane. Everything about them bespoke the utmost poverty. A thick belt of trees shut out their view from the fields, and heaps of ashes and pestiferous deposits in front of them proclaimed the absence of all proper conveniences of life. They were the houses of agricultural labourers. As is too often the case, they were not built by the landed proprietor, but were left to the speculation of the village carpenter or bricklayer, who erected them of refuse materials, and at a charge for rental returning more than cent. per cent.

In the first of these miserable hovels in which they perceived a light, they saw a woman sitting by the blaze of a few sticks and in a state of deep dejection. They ventured to enter here, hoping to induce the woman, by a small fee, to proceed to the baker's and purchase them some bread. But the moment they entered the cottage a foetid odour struck upon their senses, and the next moment they observed a dead body lying in the room. It was that of a boy of about twelve years of age ; and the story of the mother filled their bosoms with horror and indignation. "The child," she said, "had been run over by the cavalry at the meeting, had suffered days of agony, and at length had died. He had now been dead a week. Decay had made dreadful progress, and yet they had no means to bury him. They had applied to the parish, but were refused all help, because the father was in employ. He earned seven shillings a week on a distant farm. They had implored the aid of the farmers for the purchase of a coffin. It had been refused. They had applied to the clergyman ; he replied that his business was to bury coffins, not to give them to the disaffected. There lay the corpse of the poor child in their only room, and near it gasped a girl of seven, in fever, the consequence of breathing this pestiferous atmosphere. The poor woman was bowed down with despair, and the husband was at this moment seeking for some bene-

volent person who would enable them to bury their dead out of their sight.

"But who shall help us?" said the poor woman: "several of our neighbours have been sold up under executions, and there is nothing here but stark staring poverty."

The two incendiaries stood thunderstruck. They who had destroyed the property of strangers without remorse were confounded at this human misery.

"Heaven and earth!" exclaimed Meldrum, "is there then no longer *any* feeling, *any* pretence to it in mankind? Do they kill and refuse to bury? Do they let the innocent child rot in the presence of its parents? Horrible barbarians! detestable cruelty! But this must not be!"

The two felons proposed to do what not a pretended Christian could be found to do. The outcasts and the abhorred of all the orderly and orthodox were the only ones who had any sense of the most solemn moral duties. They set at defiance their own danger; and guided by the unhappy woman, they proceeded to a little draper's shop, and purchased a packing-case of sufficient length. In this they deposited the putrescent child, and again guided by the weeping mother, they procured a ladder, and scaling the wall of the locked-up churchyard, they dug a grave, and by lantern-light buried the poor unoffending child, that had found no pity from the wealthy and comfortable. What must have been the religion which had been for ages preached in that church, which had produced no better fruits? Certainly it could not be the religion of Christ.

As the coffin lay in the bottom of the grave, before they began to shovel in the earth, Bates said to Meldrum:—

"Meldrum, you are a sort of a parson; finish the job well, by saying a service over the poor thing."

"Nay! nay! not so," said Meldrum. "I cannot, I cannot, indeed!"

"Nonsense, man! say a short one; don't bury the poor child like a dog."

Meldrum stood for a moment silent. A spasm seemed to pass over his features, and casting a look up into the dark sky, he ejaculated, in a deep hollow voice:—

"God!—if there be a God—hear us! Let the soul of this poor child—if souls there be—find that in heaven, which no

longer exists on earth—mercy, and peace, and love. Earth ! that receivest this child to thy bosom,—be his second mother, and let him sleep soundly, where no ruthless horseman can crush him ; where no proud professor of a humble creed can spurn his agonies and his prayers. Receive us too, O Earth ! Earth ! for in thy bosom there is rest, though on thy surface there remains no longer anything but hearts of the nether millstone, and the cant of sanctity which has no pity. Let the day of thy final doom come ; for the villain and malefactor are the only ones left in whom there is a spark of nature. If the wicked have become the best that thou hast to boast, what can purge their vileness but the last devouring flame ! Amen.”

The affrighted mother shrunk from the side of the speaker, though he had laid her child in the earth which all others had refused him ; and even Bates, as he began to shovel in the earth, muttered between his teeth, “ Devil take such a sermon as that ! Why, Meldrum, you are mad !”

Meldrum made no reply, but shovelling in the earth with all his might, they clapped on the crowning turf, and the three hastened over the wall, and quitting the poor woman at her door, the two retreated into the darkness, without further thought of the loaf which had brought them thither.

The two incendiaries walked through the dark night in silence. At length they approached another village, and into this Bates volunteered to enter and procure some bread. Meldrum remained leaning on a gate. For about half an hour he continued awaiting his return, when he heard him come with hurried steps, and bidding him “ come along ” in a strange whisper, he hurried on down the lane in which they were, till they reached an open hill at some distance. Here Bates threw himself down in a hollow, and producing a loaf and some cheese from his handkerchief which he had carried under his arm, and a bottle of beer from his coat pocket, he put the bottle to his mouth, took a deep draught, and handing it to Meldrum, said :—

“ Do you know, Meldrum, where we are ? ”

“ No ; how the devil should I ? ”

“ Why, then, I can tell you ; we are where we must not be staying long. The village there is Scrimton. I would not let you go into it, lest you might be known ; and it is

well. The land sharks, or the red lobsters if you will, are abroad there. Button is off to America. He was obliged to make a quick exit, for his taking the chair at the meeting. His widow,—wife, I mean,—curses you as the cause of it and the troubles; the child killed, that we've just buried, *hallaxed* about before the justices, and the like, and all the farmers and gentlemen being as sore as baited bears, and turning off every poor devil they can."

Meldrum groaned.

"Well, never groan at that, my man; these things must be before we can rouse them. There, eat some bread and cheese, and let us be going, for it's not safe here, I can tell you."

The two ate up their provision, for it was the only food they had had for two days. Bates whirled the bottle through the darkness as far as his strength would let him send it, and starting to his feet, they hastened down between the hills, directing their steps for Twigg's Houses, and the safe shelter of the roof of Captain Crick.

After walking on for upwards of an hour, they found themselves on the edge of a low marshy sort of moor, and were in the act of crossing a stile, when the cry of a curlew struck on their ear, a little in advance of them. Bates started, and remained with one leg on each side of the stile, as he returned the cry with a perfectness of imitation which surprised Meldrum. This was followed by the short crow of a pheasant, and Bates, advancing with cautious steps, followed by Meldrum in wondering silence, they soon saw a man standing in the middle of a narrow path, in which they had to advance. "Bates!" "Arpthorp!" These words were scarcely given and returned, when Meldrum perceived that the person before them was no other than the trusty hostler of Captain Crick.

"What's up?" said Bates, "for there's something, or you had not been here."

"There's that up," said Arpthorp, "that you must cut, and keep clear of Twigg's Houses. The governor has been on the look-out for you these three or four nights, and I've had to cool my toes on your account in more places than one. To-day he'd a notion that you'd be coming this way. Well, a word with you by yourself."

The two went to some distance up the hill, and Meldrum could hear them in earnest conversation, of which he could catch nothing but sundry oaths. It was plain, however, that they discussed matters of no little moment; at length, Bates came back alone.

"Back's the word, Meldrum! We must make for safe quarters, if they can be found, for we are smoked. There's a devil of a hue and cry after us for the rick burnings. Crick won't have us come within a score miles of him, if he can help it. I'm off on business for him down to Plymouth, and you'd better get into London for a while, and hide in the thickest place you can find. Change your clothes, my boy, too; mind that! and you can hear of me by a note; you can write to Crick's any time,—only have a care what you say; only ask, 'Where's the wool lodged?' and wherever Crick says, there I am. If I can't rejoin you, I shall, may be, be able to tell you where you can join me in some other part of the country. Good bye!"

CHAPTER V.

LOWER AND YET LOWER; JAMES MELDRUM A MURDERER AND AN OUTCAST.

THE two friends—shall we call them?—No, there can be no friendship between the wicked, by whatever means they may have been driven into their wickedness,—the two scoundrel incendiaries—the men already worked up from plodding and simple countrymen into malefactors,—parted. They hoped to meet again—for what? To commit more crimes—to indulge still more their revenge on society, even while they still flattered themselves that they did God service by rousing the poor against their oppressors. Bates disappeared through the dark, and Meldrum, with some dodging, made his way once more to Reading. Bates had told him to plunge into the great wilderness of London for safety—to hide himself in the densest underwood of its indigent myriads; but Meldrum had never been in the huge metropolis, and he had a sort of dread of it. He considered himself unqualified to make his way there, where he had always heard that rascality received the highest finish of education in the great school of streets and crowds. He had a well-founded notion that at his time of life he was not likely to acquire that adroitness which those put to this famous school by the step-mother Necessity in their earliest years are possessed of, and that to play out the game of life's chess against city police was a different thing to skulking in woods and under hedges, putting a wire necklace round an unlucky hare, or thrusting a lucifer into a rick.

For these weighty reasons Meldrum lingered in a wretched hiding hole in one of the lowest alleys in Reading. He avoided as much as possible the daylight, and the eyes of men. He had a few shillings which Bates had given him at parting, but these soon wasted away, and poverty stared him in the face. There is no such despot as the keeper of a lodging-house. The laws of the Medes and Persians were nothing to his laws. Death himself is not more inexorable;

it is to pay or turn out. Meldrum saw that the latter alternative was approaching, and yet he lingered. He starved himself to eke out his few remaining shillings, and stole out at night when it was thoroughly dark to range into the country, and see whether he could not snickle a hare, rob a potato pit, or at least gather some turnips to boil. But the winter was now set in with merciless fierceness. He had to gather the few turnips that he could secure from those which had been pulled from the frosty ground during the day for the flocks, and which, by the time he reached the field, were half eaten. The wind swept through him with frosty rigour, shaking his very bones within him, for his clothes were every day getting more thin and dilapidated ; and his internal clothing—that of his stomach—was equally deficient. With hunger and anxiety upon him he began to brood over desperate thoughts. Hares, potatoes, and turnips, were not likely to satisfy him long. The prospect of soon having no sheltering roof, even such as he had now, without fire, and with few articles of covering at night, and no home but this bleak, freezing, and nocturnal world, in which he ranged to and fro, made him grow desperate. He had written to Captain Crick, hoping to hear something of Bates, and clinging to the hope of going off to him, though in some very distant place : but the answer which came was as short and cutting as any human style could possibly arrive at ! “The wool is lodged in Derby warehouse, and will soon be exported. Write no more here ; we have no further dealings in your line.”

There was no name signed : Meldrum knew it was not safe. The wool in Derby warehouse, and about to be exported ! Bates in Derby gaol, and about to be transported ! That was a death-blow to his last hope. His last shilling was in his pocket ; to-morrow it must pass into that of his landlord. A pressure was on his soul like tons of lead ; every nerve and sinew in his body seemed stretched as on a rack ; devils seemed tugging at every one of them. There was an agony, black, terrible, and demoniac, in his heart and in every limb. He stole forth at night, and took his way mechanically towards his own village. Beecup, and the farm where he had worked so many years, seemed to draw him even when he was not thinking of them, but of some deadly

termination to his misery. Many such presented themselves to his racked and lacerated brain; but he decided on none: such choice is not easily made—it requires the last turn of the rack of mental torture, and then it is snatched, not chosen.

Awaking out of a dream of horrors, as it seemed, the unhappy wretch found himself standing on the old green, and before the very house where he had passed so many happy and innocent, aye, virtuous years. The moon had risen, and shone with a light almost of day, on the pure, silent, and glittering expanse of snow which covered everything. There was not a living thing abroad. The sound of a dog's bark, and the crow of a cock, came ever and anon from the distant farms, but all besides was profoundly still, and brilliant. The full stream of moonlight played on the cottage front, and lit up every piece of framed timber, and every brick. The snow lay thick on the thatch, and the long icicles hung sparkling like the lustres of a chandelier from the eaves. Every pane of glass, and every corner and bush of the garden—the great square stone by the door, and the dry stalks of the last year's house-leek, on the ridge of the house, all were distinct as at noon, and fell on Meldrum's soul with the same sensation as if a red-hot iron were passed through his vitals. The long history of the past went across his mind with the fleetness and the devastating violence of a hurricane through the desert,—his wife, his children, his Methodist friends and leadership; the new system of the new landlord; this depopulating system—and what had since followed. Satan himself, when pondering on his fall from heaven, did not experience worse pangs, nor feel more utterly damned.

At the first moment Meldrum half started at the open brightness, and feared lest he might be seen, but the next moment a spirit of defiance to men and fate seized him. Any one seeing him stand before that cottage, which stood in the brilliant light, as shut up and silent as if it slept as well as its inhabitants, would have regarded him as some fellow of the most malignant stamp, meditating some horrible deed.

And they would not have been far wrong: but against that house or its inmates he planned, meditated nothing. He cast a fierce glance to where the hall stood in the front of

its noble woods on the neighbouring uplands, the moonlight blazing on its white proud front, and at the thought that there lay, in luxury and earth's fulness of good, the man that had made him what he was; he stalked on, and at every step a more misanthropic gall gathered into his heart. The time he felt was come for some desperate deed. He was returning to his lodgings ravenous with hunger, but without hope of even a crust of bread, and the one shilling in his pocket must be paid, and then——! But why should he return at all? Why not spend that shilling for food, and seek fresh quarters for the next night? As these thoughts went through his mind he came within view of a genteel cottage, which he used daily to pass on his way from the town to the farm. It was one which turned its back upon the road, and had attached to it a garden, of which the edge also ran along the road side.

Sudden ideas flashed into the malefactor's heart. He stood still, and gazed on that house as he had gazed on his own. In this cottage lived an old lady, a widow, a woman of genteel station and habits, but of small property. In this cottage, five miles from the town, she and her husband, in his life-time, used to spend the summers; since his death she had lived there altogether. Two nieces, and a maid servant, constituted her family. A man came every day to look after her pony and chaise, tend the garden, and clean knives and shoes. But he lived a quarter of a mile off, and generally completed his duties in a morning. This house might have been once considered an exposed residence for ladies only, but in these days of quiet and police there seemed no cause for fear. The old lady often boasted that she had never had so much as a cat killed, or a cabbage stolen. There was a black terrier, it is true, chained in the garden, near the house, with a small cask laid on one side for a kennel; but this kennel was placed close within the hedge, and nothing could have been easier than for any designing persons to make acquaintance with the dog. Meldrum had already done this, without any design; but having stopped frequently in summer mornings and evenings as he went by, to peep through the thinner places of the hedge at the flowers and the neat lawn, and sometimes at the ladies walking there, often merrily talking and laughing,

and sometimes on a summer evening seated out on the grass at their work, he had set himself to soothe the dog when he began to bark as he stopped. By degrees the acquaintance became thoroughly confirmed by the occasional use of soft caressing words from Meldrum, and the toss of a dry crust over the hedge.

It is a proverb that hungry dogs will eat dirty pudding ; but it is equally true that pampered dogs will eagerly eat a very wretched and unsavoury morsel amidst all their plenty, when they can get it from the most miserable beggar. Meldrum was long ago on such terms of intimacy with this dog, that, instead of barking at his approach, he knew his very step, and coming around to the back of his kennel would stand silently wagging his tail.

But besides this dog there was another object which had often attracted Meldrum's attention, and that was the small window which looked out upon the road, and which, with a degree of carelessness which nothing but long security could have induced, had been more than once left at night with the shutter unclosed, after the room within had been lighted up. Meldrum's curiosity had led him, when this had occurred, as he passed to peep through the opening at the side of the blind, and view what was passing within. There he saw the lady and her nieces seated in their elegant room, at their tea, or reading and working, or appearing as happy as earth could make them. To Meldrum the contrast with his own wretched condition, and miserable lodgings in the town, had not been wanting in bitterness. But one evening he had been much excited by seeing the old lady alone—occupied in what ? In counting over a number of sovereigns that appeared to Meldrum's imagination a perfect mine of gold. He saw her pick up the coin, deposit it in a small drawer, and crossing the room, place this drawer in its proper location, a desk, which she closed and locked, but, to his surprise, did not take the key from. The old lady certainly did not seem a very suspicious character, nor quite prudently careful, or she would have had this shutter early closed, and the key of the desk not standing in the key-hole, but snug in her pocket.

Meldrum's curiosity and other feelings were excited, and every time that he could get a peep through this window of

an evening he looked eagerly at the desk, and to his wonder saw the key almost invariably standing in the key-hole.

This fact had generated many queer thoughts in his mind. He had pondered, and turned many things in his thoughts, and speculated on his acquaintance with the dog, and other matters. But all this was long ago. By a singular chance, or rather from his having been withdrawn from this road, and occupied with engrossing affairs in distant places, he had entirely forgotten these things and thoughts. They now came upon him all at once, and with a strange force. They could not have come upon him under more perilous circumstances, either for his own honesty, if he had any left, or for the property of the lady. He stood and gazed on the house—he drew near to the place by the hedge where the dog's kennel stood. If the dog was in it, it slept, for nothing moved, and Meldrum turned, and walked onwards towards the town, and with quickened speed. As the road wound so as to be about to shut out the view of the house, he turned suddenly round, gave another look at the house, and then went on again. It was long after midnight. The moon, which had risen early in the evening, but under thick clouds and the obscurity of a heavy snow shower, was now setting, after a run of radiance, through a most intensely blue and frosty sky ; and it grew dark. This suited Meldrum, and under its shade, with the knowledge he had of the town and the rounds of the night-police, he managed to reach his wretched lodgings, for his last sleep there. No—rest there ? no—for he neither had sleep nor rest : his mind was busy with a black temptation—he waited the passing of the next day, and the evening of the next night, as a tiger waits in its jungle.

The landlord came with his demand ; Meldrum paid down his last shilling : and as the shades of night fell, he started forth, a man without a penny—without a home : but not without an object.

In the house which attracted Meldrum's attention on his return from his night ramble, on the following morning might be seen assembled at breakfast the old lady and her two nieces. These young ladies were in a particularly gay humour, and the conversation all turned on the event of the day—their setting out to London on a Christmas visit.

It was within a few days of this season, and these ladies were about to pass a fortnight of it with their friends in town. They were in full and delightful anticipations of parties, dances, theatres, and similar pleasures. The old lady was happy in their pleasure, and sent a thousand messages of affectionate remembrances to her old friends in the metropolis.

"But I am so concerned, dear aunt :" said one of them, "that you will be so lonely; I wish you were going with us."

"Ay, that is all very fine," replied the aunt, "but while I cannot, with my weak back, even get up stairs without pain and exhaustion, what, indeed, should I do in London. No, no: I am quite happy that you will be enjoying yourselves, and I shall not be lonely either. Don't you remember that Fred, my dear lad, is coming next week; and what can I desire more than to see him, and talk to him while you are away?"

"Ay, but Fred, dear aunt, will always be flying away to Reading. He will have too many engagements there to leave you much talking time."

"No," replied the old lady, "he will be here in the day-time. He will only be away in the evenings."

"And that is just when you will want company," added both the young ladies in a breath. "Oh dear! I do not think it safe for you to be here long evenings, and very likely whole nights, by yourself. Do be persuaded, and let Jonas come and sleep in the house."

"No, no: Fred will be here in a few days, and then all will be safe enough, I hope. Why, how many years have I lived here, and not a stick or a straw taken!"

"But do you know, aunt," said one of the nieces, turning pale, "do you know, I actually dreamed the other night that I saw a thief in the house, with his face blackened, and I woke with the fright, and thought I would not leave home unless you had Jonas here?"

"Nonsense, child! with your dreams and blackened faces; you want to alarm me, that I may have Jonas as guard; and, if it will make you any more contented, he shall come."

"That's right! that's right!" exclaimed the young ladies,

clapping their hands for very joy over their triumph,—“that’s right; now we shall be quite happy. But pray, dear aunt, don’t let Jane forget to feed the canary.”

And with this the lively girl sprang up, and approaching the cage, began talking to the bird, which came fluttering to the side of its prison, speaking in its musical and expressive notes to its mistress.

The next moment the glad and sprightly girls sprung away upstairs to pack for the departure, and presently the pony-chaise drew up to the front of the house, and the maid ran up stairs, crying,—“Miss Emma! Miss Matilda! the chaise is here!”

In a few more minutes the strong, blooming country girl was lugging boxes and trunks down stairs, and handing them to the man; and the two ladies, after sundry reminders by the maid that Jonas said they would be too late for the train, and their aunt calling to them from the bottom of the stairs, made their appearance, all freshness and smiles, and, embracing their aunt, took their departure.

Such was the scene in the morning; at night the old lady, who slept in the room on the ground-floor adjoining the sitting-room, awoke with some unusual noise in this sitting-room, and, opening the door, beheld the dream of her niece—a man with a blackened face and a dark lantern standing by her desk, which was open, and her money-drawer in his hand.

At this sight she uttered a piercing shriek, and in the next moment she felt herself seized by the shoulders and pitched headlong into her bed-room: the door was closed upon her and locked, and the villain, emptying the contents of her money-drawer into his pocket, decamped through the door, which was left open on purpose, and was gone.

In the morning, Jonas, who had slept in the house, came downstairs first, and was astonished to find the door open; and then immediately to find the desk open, and one drawer out, and empty. He roused the maid, whose terror was excessive, and they soon found other traces of the visit of a robber. One of the windows towards the garden was open, and the means by which it had been opened were obvious enough. In the snow under the window there was much trampling, as of a man’s feet. A strong iron chisel, a foot

in length, was lying in the snow, and a pot of treacle and some paper. It was plain that the burglar or burglars had forced off the shutters with the chisel, and applying a piece of treacled paper to a pane, had cut it round with a glazier's diamond, and thus made an entrance for a hand to unfasten the sash.

It was easy to conceive that this operation had been done with tolerable silence, as the glass, even if it fell with the treacled paper sticking to it, would make no noise. But then, how had it happened that neither man nor maid were awoke by the shriek of their mistress?

They now hastened to apprise their mistress of the alarming facts. The maid knocked at her door—she did not wake; she knocked again—all was still; louder yet—there was no reply. Then the maid, still more alarmed, opened the door, and, approaching the bed, stumbled over something on the floor. She screamed: the man rushed in with a candle, and stood horrified at the spectacle which presented itself;—it was that of his mistress, lying dead, with her head against the bed-post and her grey hair and cap all clotted with gore.

It may be imagined what was the horror of the two domestics. They lifted the dead body of their mistress upon her bed: it was cold and stiff, and had evidently been lifeless for hours. The man mounted one of the ponies and galloped off to the town to give notice to the magistracy and surgeon, leaving the maid in a state of grief and terror indescribable.

It was not long before two officers of police and a surgeon arrived in the utmost haste at the house. The door, the window, the chisel, the treacle-pot, the feet-marks—all were examined; the servants strictly questioned; the body of the deceased scrutinized. There was no mark of violence about the corpse, except a large wound on the top of the head, which the surgeon at once attributed to the lady having fallen or been pushed violently against the sharp corner of the bed-post, in contact with which it lay.

Had all else been right, it might have been supposed that the deceased had got out of bed in the night and by some accident fallen against the bed; but the open door and window, and the apparatus for effecting an entrance,

demonstrated that there had been violence used by some other party.

The coroner and his jury arrived also in a few hours, and the circumstances of the case were again minutely examined into. There then began to turn, as it was very likely that it would, a suspicion against the man and maid. They were both sleeping in the house ; the young ladies were absent ; they professed to have slept so soundly as to have heard no noise or outcry whatever. For many years the old lady had resided here without the slightest molestation, or even petty theft ; her nieces quit her, the man-servant comes to sleep in the house, and that very night the lady is murdered. They both protested, not only their innocence, but their deep regard for their mistress. They showed that the door was open, and spoke of the forced window, and the chisel, and the treacle. The police pointed to blood on their clothes : this, the servants said, was owing to their having lifted the body from the floor to the bed.

The inquest returned a verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown," and agreed so far in the force of circumstantial evidence with the police and surgeon, that the two servants were lodged in gaol for further inquiry.

That very day the terrified nieces in London received the dreadful intelligence, that their aunt was murdered, and their servants in gaol on suspicion of the foul deed.

Meldrum was the murderer ; and instead of one victim there bade fair to be three. The two innocent servants, spite of their unimpeachable characters, and of the opinion of the lady's nieces given warmly in their favour, lay at the peril of their lives in the prison, with the force of circumstances against them. They were examined and re-examined, but without anything being able to be really brought home to them, or anything appearing which might clearly exculpate them. The poor maid was in agonies of fear and passionate grief at the very suspicion of having raised her hand against her mistress. Her family and the family of Jonas were in despair.

On the third day, a certain glazier came to give evidence, that his shop, situated at the back of a yard, had been broken open after it was dark, and a diamond pencil stolen

away, and this diamond had been found in the way between the house of the deceased and the cottage of the man Jonas : this was considered decisive, and the two servants were finally committed for trial. No more money was found in Jonas's house : it was thought he had hid it too securely : but some days afterwards, a woman who kept a little shop, hearing of the treacle-pot, requested to see it, and declared that it was hers, and had been obtained by a man in drab, whom she had frequently seen about, on pretence that it had been for a gentleman well known in the town, who lived near her shop, and that he would pay for it ; the money she had never seen, and on sending to the gentleman's house it was denied that they had ever sent him.

The police were not long in fixing their suspicions on Meldrum, whose appearance was well known to them ; they found that he had gone out that night, and had never since been seen ; that he was in needy and most suspicious circumstances ; that he was suspected of being the incendiary speaker at the agricultural meeting ; and that he had been for a long time in the habit of passing this very house of the murdered lady on his way to and from his work.

So far did this operate that the two innocent accused were liberated on bail, and a strong hue and cry issued against Meldrum.

In the meantime this miserable murderer had flown, with the furies of hell in his soul. He had committed robbery, and his neck was in danger. What injury he had done the old lady he did not yet know, but he knew that it could not be trivial, for he heard her fall with violence on the floor and heard her groan. With her booty on his person, and a haunting suspicion of murder in his heart, he fled up the road, and at some distance plunged in a copse, where he washed the grime from his face with snow, and then, regaining the road, pursued his way as fast as he could towards London. Before it was light he had made such progress that he had outgone the flying rumour of the crime, and dreading to be seen on the road, he daringly mounted a coach coming from another great highway, and reached London before noon. Here he lost no time in making his way into the densest part of Whitechapel ; and, purchasing

some bread at a baker's, he dived into the most obscure alleys he could find in search of a private lodging,—however mean he cared not, so that it were private. He dared not trust himself in any common lodging-house, for the tramping tenants of such haunts might recognize him, should there be any description of his person. At length he saw what he deemed a fitting spot. There was a paper in the window,—"An upper room to let for a single man, half-a-crown a week." But, before he ventured to inquire, he went off several streets and purchased a suit of sailor's clothes, which he saw exposed, and an old great coat, which concealed his ordinary garb. Thus partly disguised, and with his sailor's bundle, he ventured on the aforesaid lodgings, and there ensconced himself.

This house, in which Meldrum had secured a retreat, was that of the landlord of various wretched tenements in this obscure alley. The man was a bachelor or widower; a tall spider-limbed man of apparently sixty, in a rusty black old dress coat, black knee-breeches, and with a face of foxy sharpness, and eyes small, peering, and expressive of avarice and selfishness. He was, in fact, the spider of his nook. His business was to collect his weekly rents, and avoid, by every sordid means possible, every species of outlay. He might be seen with his high shoulders, stooping head, and long thin limbs, going out and in, chiefly to fetch in his daily necessaries, which he purchased at the most miserable little shop in the neighbourhood, because he thus got his rent. Every room in his house, which was tall and narrow, was let, except one in which he lived, and into this he never let any one enter. If any of his lodgers went to speak to him, or pay their rent, he answered the knock by looking out with the door just enough opened to admit half his face and one eye to be seen, and putting a small chain across while he transacted the business,—that is, took the money and entered it into the lodger's book, and gave this book back again.

Of course nothing could be more wretched than the rooms of this tenement. Meldrum found a mass of filthy rags on an iron bedstead, which was called a bed, and a wooden stool, in his room. That was all the furniture. There was a fireplace, but no fire; and as it was miserably cold weather

he got some coals brought in,—the landlord taking the money and ordering them, and having them set inside of the house ; Meldrum himself carrying them up to his room. Here he as speedily as possible doffed his old drab suit and put on his sailor's dress ; carefully rolling up the old suit into a bundle, and tying them in his handkerchief. No sooner was it dark than he descended the stairs to issue forth with the bundle, his purpose being to carry it and sink it in the Thames. The front door, however, he found locked ; and while pottering about to see if he could get it open, the landlord put forth his sharp face, half covered with a white beard a week old, through the partly opened door of his room, and throwing the light of a candle on him, asked what he wanted.

“To go out,” said Meldrum.

“What would you go out for ?” demanded the old man-spider, looking keenly at Meldrum’s bundle, as if he suspected that his new lodger was in truth making off from his not very enviable quarters ; though he had taken his usual precaution to have the week’s rent of the room in advance.

“I want my working suit mended,” said Meldrum.
“Have you a tailor near ?”

“To be sure,” said the man. “I’ll go and show you ;” and with this he put his chain over his door for a moment, and in the next came out with his hat on. This by no means suited Meldrum’s purpose, who stoutly opposed it.

“Oh ! if you don’t like me to go into the tailor’s with you, I’ll stay in the street while you go in—I only want to help you.”

“Thank you,” said Meldrum, drily ; “but I can do very well myself. I never will have anybody with me when I go about business.”

“Well, well !” said the man ; “every one to his ways, well, well !” And with a malicious look he opened the door, and glancing the light after Meldrum, as he issued into the alley, as if he expected he was going clear off, he then closed the door. Meldrum, greatly relieved at this riddance, now set out to reach the Thames. Whether he had studied a map of London at any time, or whether he enquired his way, is unknown, but he was soon stalking down Ayliffe-street, past Goodman’s-fields, into Rosemary-lane, and so out to Tower-hill. Here, hastening across Little Tower-hill, to

escape as quickly as possible from the light of the gas in the open space, he plunged down the lane betwixt the Tower and St. Katherine's-docks. To effect his purpose, however, of procuring some heavy stones and sinking his bundle into the river, was no easy attempt. Everywhere there seemed to his uneasy eye gas-lights, sauntering police, watermen, and idlers. It was not till he had made several essays, and found as many obstructions, that after retracing his steps, traversing East Smithfield and Ratcliff-highway for a great distance, he turned down New Gravel-lane, and between Wapping-docks and Wall contrived to drop his bundle into the murky water, and saw it swallowed up, as he hoped, for ever.

Hurrying back at his best speed, he found by the church clocks as he went along that it was late, and on arriving at the door of his lodgings he had to knock long and loud before he could get an entrance. Though he knew that the landlord lay in his room, which was the very next to the door, he had raised all the lodgers, who put their heads out of the upper windows, one after another, before he could rouse him.

"It's the new lodger," said a woman's voice in the chamber window just over the door to some one in the room ; "If old Brassington isn't in the humour, I'm blessed if he'll let him in, perishing as the night is."

The next minute he heard the same voice at old Brassington's door, accompanied by a good lusty knocking, telling him the top lodger was raising the street in trying to make him hear. Presently he heard the key turn and chains fall, and old Brassington showed his fox's face and ferret eyes through a narrow opening of the door, and said,—

"So it's you, eh ? You keep pretty hours, don't you ? Have you been all this time finding the tailor ?"

"Let me in," said Meldrum, gruffly ; "I've stood starving long enough, man, I should think."

The door opened, and Meldrum, seeing the door locked again, asked the old man for a light to find his way up to his room.

"If you'll pay for it, you can have it," said Brassington ; and Meldrum, assenting to the miserly demand, made his

way up to his desolate attic : there, wearied with the exertion of the day and the excitement of the last night, he threw himself upon the vile bed, and slept a heavy sleep till morning ; he arose, made a fire, and then went out to buy necessaries for his breakfast. At the shop where he did this he had to change one of his sovereigns, and his suspicious state of mind was alarmed as the man seemed to give a glance at him as he took the money, and again as he counted out the change. His guilty spirit was in a constant condition of dread ; not a light shone on him but it seemed as if on purpose to expose him ; not an eye fell on him but he expected a detection.

As he sat at his breakfast, with his great coat in which he had gone out still on his back, his landlord came in without ceremony to claim a halfpenny for the last night's candle. Meldrum paid it, and expected him to take himself off ; but Brassington had no such intention. Meldrum's fire had attractions, for he indulged in none of his own ; and besides, he was devoured with curiosity as to his new lodger's who and what.

" So you are a sailor, eh ? "

Meldrum nodded.

" Ay, so ; and in what service are you, then ? —the Merchant, I reckon."

Meldrum nodded again ; but by this time a cold terror had seized on him. In assuming the guise of a sailor, he had forgotten that he would have to act the part of a sailor too ; and there was not a man on earth less qualified by any knowledge of the life, language, or habits of sailors. He had no preconcerted plan on the subject—no story. What was he to do ?

" In the Merchant service, are you ? " continued the landlord. " What vessel do you belong to, eh ? "

" It's only a collier," said Meldrum.

" A collier—oh ! you're a collier boy, eh ? Coast it to Newcastle or there, eh ? "

Meldrum nodded.

" You're deuced mum for a sailor ; but then a collier is but half a sailor—he is not much better than a canal boatman."

"No," said Meldrum.

"What's the vessel? Who's the master? Where does she lie, eh?"

Meldrum, who was just as well prepared to answer one question as the other, broke out with a —

"What the devil does it signify to you where she lies, I should like to know? If I pay you for my room, you can afford, I fancy, to let me have it to myself, and keep off from boring me with your catechism. If that is not it, why I am off again."

"Oh! I did not mean to offend you—I was only asking in a friendly way," added Brassington, drawing nearer to the fire, and rubbing his hands.

"Are you fond of news? I've just got the paper," pulling it out of his pocket, "and I'll read it to you, if you like:" and, without waiting for an answer, he hurried out, and returned with an old chair, which he placed by the fire, and seated himself. A terrible sensation went through Meldrum at the very mention of a newspaper. He was deprived of all power of utterance or motion. He sat on his chair as if glued to it, and the rustle of the page, as Brassington spread it out and prepared to read, seemed to say,—“Ay, there's all about it!” He felt a certain desperate assurance that his crime was all detailed there—and it was not only robbery, but murder. The old man turned over one side, then another, then folded it in half, then into a quarter. Foreign news—I don't take much interest in that. The markets—how are things? Consols?—Oh! that's well. Shares?—very bad indeed. Hang all these advertisements! one would wonder how they answer. Domestic news?—Ay, let's hear a little of that. Police?—Ay, that's what I like. What's here?—robbery! murder!—Nothing but murder now-a-days. Gad! what! A lady of property? There it is again! who'd have money? But—" Here the old man's eyes seemed to fix on something with a keenness that made them glitter like a basilisk's, and he seemed to devour the very paper.—“The deuce! the lady found dead—head against bed-post; diamond and treacle-pot, and—a fellow in drab suspected:—a hundred pounds reward! Lord bless us! a hundred pounds! The man about sixty—middle size—old drab suit—melancholy aspect—deep ruddy complexion.

The old rascal!—a hundred pounds! If one could but drop upon such a prize, now. Thought to be in London—in London!—well!” Here he looked at Meldrum, who certainly did not answer to the description, either by a ruddy complexion or old drab suit; but, thunderstruck at the confirmation of his fears, that the old lady was dead, that murder was on his soul, and that he was suspected, and his retreat so truly surmised, he imagined that Brassington saw as clearly as daylight that he had the criminal before him, and the hundred pounds in his grasp. Hell could have no worse torture than he endured. His head seemed to have a legion of devils in it; his heart was clutched as if by the hand of the arch-fiend himself, with a deadly, heavy, unimaginable agony; his limbs were petrified, and yet on fire. If the earth would but swallow him up! and yet at the thought of it he sprang up in a terror which unlocked his enchain'd powers, and, rushing past Brassington, darted down the stairs. At that action, the whole truth, which, spite of Meldrum's fancy, had never yet dawned on Brassington's greedy mind, flashed across it, and shrieking,—“Stop him! stop him!—the murderer, the—” he sprang after him. The women in the different rooms rushed to the doors, some with half-clad infants in their arms, (all the men were gone out,) and, as they saw the two men going almost headlong down the stairs, they screamed amazed, and the children screamed in still higher terror. But the whole was gone past in a moment: in the next, they heard a scuffle, the banging of the front door, and, by the time they reached the ground-floor, they found the front-door locked from the outside, and Brassington locked in his own room; and discovered him, when they opened it, prostrate on the floor, and bleeding copiously from the nose.

The murderer had escaped by an exercise of presence of mind in the midst of his desperation that appeared wonderful; and this raised the opinion of the villain for strength, courage, and audacity, in the whole house, to an extraordinary pitch, though nobody suspected who it was, except Brassington himself. But there he was, in London, in the immediate neighbourhood. Brassington knew it, and the moment that he recovered from the effects of his fall he set out in pursuit. A hundred pounds! and the fellow just

now in his hands, and gone ! It was distraction. He was bent on having him again : he raised no hue and cry, however ; he gave no one any idea of this being the advertised murderer ; he said only that he had robbed him ; and he determined to hunt him from end to end of London. Nobody but he knew that Meldrum had assumed the dress of a sailor. The police were on the look-out for a man in drab. He chuckled to himself over their delusion. The game was his, if anybody's ; and cupidity and revenge urged him vehemently to the pursuit.

CHAPTER V.

OF WHAT HAPPENED TO JOE BATES, AND HOW CAPTAIN CRICK AND HIS LADY DEFENDED THEMSELVES, AND FINALLY LEFT TWIGG'S HOUSES.

BUT while this pursuit is going on, we must take up a thread that we have let fall, and wind up the story of Joe Bates. Joe had found his way, or rather had been shewn it, into Derby gaol. His offence was issuing a coin, which, though it bore the Queen's profile, had never really issued from her mint. In spending this money, he was obliging his friend and employer, Captain Crick; for the dealings of Captain Crick were manifold. Joe having been safely lodged in Derby gaol to await his trial at the next county sessions, one day found another prisoner suddenly introduced into the cell. The turnkey said something about the crowded state of the prison, and that two men, whose offence was pretty much alike, could not very greatly corrupt each other's innocence, and added jocularly, that as they had every prospect of making the same foreign tour together, it might be no harm for them to make a degree of acquaintance.

The new prisoner appeared overwhelmed with his fate. He lay and wept and wrung his hands in great distress. Bates endeavoured to enter into conversation with him, and to elicit the nature and extent of his offence, but this for some time was totally unavailing. The prisoner was too much occupied with his trouble to notice the advances of Bates. At length, however, the storm of his grief somewhat abated, and then Bates drew from him that he was incarcerated for an offence similar to his own. On this, Bates expressed wonder at his extreme sorrow; told him that he was not yet sure that he would be convicted, and if he were, why a voyage to the southern hemisphere, the then punishment, was rather a thing to be desired than afflicted at.

The two prisoners, whom a similarity of offence drew towards each other, soon advanced to a degree of familiarity, compared their experience, and spoke of the qualities of the coin they had been industriously circulating. Bates soon

convinced himself that his new associate had gone to a very inferior manufactory, and gave him the address of the one where he had been supplied. He promised him that if he escaped conviction, and went out into society again, he would find the coin of this house so admirably executed as to add immensely to the safety of the circulators.

The next day, the turnkey, to Bates' great mortification, said they had now made room for the other prisoner in another part of the gaol, and had him removed. The object of the turnkey, and the prisoner too, had, in fact, been served. The prisoner was no other than the head of the town police, whom we call for convenience, Harper. The magistrates, struck with the singularly fine execution of the coin that Bates had been distributing through the country, and aware that this was certain to give it an extraordinary diffusion, were anxious to detect the makers, and had hit upon this stratagem. Harper, elated with his success with Bates, lost no time in entering the train, and steaming away to Birmingham. Arrived, not only in that town, but in that obscure street, and before the tall and narrow house indicated, he rang the bell, and announced that he had called on private business, and by the recommendation of Bates. He was soon in the presence of the man of the house, and gave his order for a considerable quantity of coinage of various values. Successful to the utmost extent of any reasonable and prudent policeman's ambition, he was now, however, prompted to a dangerous experiment. He expressed himself in the most enraptured terms of the beauty and perfection of the coinage ; so much so, that he declared, if it were not too great a favour to ask, he should extremely like to see the machinery by which they executed it. The coiner gave an immediate and most polite assent, as he said, to one who came recommended from such a quarter that he was sure he might put confidence in him. Harper was, therefore, conducted upstairs to the very top of the house, three or four stories. Here he was shown the ingenious machinery, the dies and other apparatus for the work, and while he was intently engaged in examining these, the floor suddenly gave way beneath his feet ; clap, clap, went one trap door after another over his head, and he fell bruised and senseless upon a floor below.

How long the victim of an imprudent curiosity remained unconscious neither he nor we are aware of, but of this he was most acutely sensible, that he was bruised and wounded most dreadfully. He was sore and stiff all over. He could feel that his head and face were clotted with congealed blood, and though no bones appeared to be broken, yet his whole frame was shaken till he felt only one great sore. The place in which he found himself was pitch dark, cold, and damp. The floor was of earth, and after groping round and round for a considerable time, he came to the conclusion that there was neither door nor window in it, except the trap-door by which he had descended into it.

Cursing his folly, which, when he had acquired every necessary information to enable him to secure the coiner and all his machinery, had thus led him into this humiliating and serious scrape, he began to speculate on what was now his best policy. If he remained there he must perish, if he cried out for aid it was only to his enemies, who might come and insult, and perhaps kill him. What was to prevent them murdering him and burying him in what appeared to be this underground dungeon? Was he, in fact, in the same house where he had fallen? Might they not, in his state of insensibility, have conveyed him into some place where he could only escape through death?

This view of the matter excessively alarmed him. He rose and shouted with all his might. There was no answer —no one came to his rescue. He repeated his outcries till he grew hoarse and exhausted. His terror became excessive. To perish in all the horror of starvation, to be here in this damp, dark dungeon, and die of hunger and cold, the prospect was terrific. In a state of the most frightful anguish, he again raised his voice, and actually howled for help. None came. He then groped around the place once more, and over every part of the floor, to find anything by which he might knock on the floor or roof above. He found only some bundles of straw, which had probably been laid so that any one whom it was found necessary to despatch through the trap-door might not be dashed to pieces. From this discovery he drew for a moment a degree of consolation. They did not, it would seem, want entirely to kill their victim, or why lay the straw? It was also pretty

certain from this that he was still in the cellar of the very house of the coiner.

But this source of comfort did not serve him long. It might only be meant to punish a prying enemy with a more cruel and excruciating death—that of the slow misery of starvation. Stung by this thought to a new sense of agony, he once more felt round and round his dungeon, and in this search he found a brick-bat partly loose in the wall, which, with the aid of his knife, he managed completely to loosen and dig out. Armed with this, he recommenced his cries, and accompanied them with almost incessant knockings on the walls of his prison. He continued this, but without any apparent effect, till he became utterly exhausted, and sinking down on the straw, he slept. How long he slept he could form no idea, nor of the time he had now been immured in that horrible place; but he felt his strength sensibly decreasing, and his hunger and thirst became torturing almost beyond endurance. The persuasion that his enemies were resolved to suffer him to perish here, filled him with a deadly despair. He flung himself one moment down on the floor with a frantic desire to die at once. Then he grew somewhat calm, and prayed to God for deliverance; and then he thought of his wife and children at home, and wept and tore his hair. Then he sprang up again and groped after his brick-bat, and could not find it. A strange terror and confusion rushed on his brain. He clung to the idea of the brick-bat, as to the hope of his salvation, and then a terrible idea seized him. His enemies had descended while he slept and taken it away! They *did* mean him to perish by inches, and were afraid he should make the people of one of the adjoining houses hear him. Horrible wretches! but he would still defeat them. He rushed to the wall, and groping round and round, at length found the old hole whence he had dug the former brick-bat. Here he cut away the mortar with the eagerness of a man labouring for life; but he did not succeed, the brick remained fast, as if secured by the whole superincumbent house. Once more he turned, half-despairing, and searched the floor with his hand. He found it! The brick-bat lay close to the straw where he had lain down.

With this he once more commenced his knockings. He

knew that two of the walls *must* adjoin the next houses—if he could but know which. To make sure, however, he laboured at all in turn, and bitter tears and groans accompanied his knockings, as he felt his vigour decline, and doubted whether it were possible even for any one in the next houses to hear his now enfeebled cries and blows.

At length—did he deceive himself, or did he really hear faint voices? It seemed clear to him that he did; faint, but eager voices, as if beyond the wall, deadened by its thickness, yet not so much so as to extinguish that character of intensity which was excited by wonder and human sympathy. He listened—knocked again—he raised his strongest cry—there again!—they were certainly voices, and they seemed in answer to his knockings. Hark! there was a sound as of a crowd above!—yes, there were footsteps over his head—there were people in active talk—there was a call—he shouted back—there was a burst of voices in simultaneous recognition. Again a call; again he replied; the same burst of conversation; and now he heard them immediately over his head.

“Where are you?” some one cried.

“Here!” he answered, “here in the dark below.”

“Great God!” exclaimed a manly voice; and presently the light flashed in on his head, so as to dazzle him, and compel him to close his eyes. He was silent a moment under the effect of this, and then some one called down:—

“Is some one there?”

“Yes.”

“Who are you?”

“Ah! that you know!” replied Harper; “the unfortunate man that you let fall through your trap-door. For God’s sake help me out! I have surely suffered enough.”

There was an active conversation above; then a ladder was put down, and Harper with some difficulty managed to mount up it, and by the help of several eager hands put down to lay hold of him, he emerged into the daylight.

There was a general exclamation of surprise and horror, as the figure of a man, covered with dirt, with bruises black and extensive, and with head and hair all clotted and matted with dry blood, rose from the trap-doorway of the cellar. All were zealously inquisitive to know how he had

come into that place and condition, but Harper was not all at once able to satisfy their curiosity, for a sickening sensation seized him, and he fainted away. On recovering his consciousness, he understood that the persons who rescued him were the inhabitants of the two adjoining houses, who, seeing the house suddenly shut up, had fancied that they still heard cries and hollow knockings from some one within. The members of one family had at length called those of the other to listen, and satisfied of the true evidence of their senses, they had resolved to inform the landlord, who came and forced a way into the house. The result was as we have related it ; and when these deliverers heard what the character of the former tenants of this house had been, and who and what Harper and his errand were, they were no little struck with the circumstances, and only wondered to find the policeman alive. The coiners had, they informed him, decamped three days ago—for so long had the house been closed.

It is almost needless to say that Harper received every kindness and hospitality so requisite to his condition, and a few days afterwards he reappeared on duty with his head well plastered and bandaged, and no little mortified that his overdoing the well-done had so entirely reversed the success of his enterprise, and occasioned him so severe, and yet ludicrous a disaster.

But this was not the final result of Bates's imprisonment, and Harper's pretended incarceration in Bates's cell. At the same moment that Harper left for Birmingham, two active officers set out to visit Captain Crick, whose concern in the coinage speculation had transpired at the same time. It turned out, in fact, that the captain was the great head and mainspring of the business, and that he had his emissaries and distributors all over the kingdom.

The captain was, therefore, one night, just about retiring to bed ; the house was closed, and every guest of the evening had gone away, when a knock came to the door, and on the captain opening it, four tall and strong-built men entered. No sooner was the entrance effected, when, ascertaining that the person who admitted them was the captain himself, they at once assured him that he was their prisoner—they being officers of the police sent to seize him.

Any one who had seen Captain Crick for the first time must have felt instantly that he was not a man to yield tamely. The two, therefore, who appeared the principal officers, at the moment they announced their message, drew and pointed each a brace of pistols, and the two others raised their truncheons conspicuously. There was no time for delay, for the captain, who sat, as was his custom at such an hour, without his boots, and with his waistcoat unbuttoned, seizing a strong wooden-bottomed chair, incontinently protruded it into the faces of the two officers in front, and dashing forward with all his weight and force, drove them back in astonishment on their two followers, who were pushed rudely against the wall. All was in a moment clamour and confusion. Mrs. Crick, who, at the entrance of these unwelcome guests, was in the act of filling the warming-pan with hot embers, on seeing the commencement of the fray, rushed gallantly to the rescue, and elevating her copper weapon, discharged at once a heavy blow on the head of the officer to the right, and the whole contents of burning cinders into his face and bosom. Still more astonished at this novel assault than at that of the captain, the officer burst forth into a perfect howl of pain and amazement, and firing one of his pistols in his fury, it dashed through the warming-pan, which was now raised high in the air, and preparing for a second descent—with a loud clangour, and smashed the glass and face of the clock against the wall, which added to the extraordinary din which now resounded through the house. The captain was still smiting forward with his chair, which served him at once as sword, bayonet, and shield, and, by his amazing strength and dexterity, astonished his assailants as much as Ulysses, on one memorable night, did the swarm of unwelcome guests in his palace. They who should have supported their superiors were rendered almost useless by being cooped up between the wall and the end of the settle, which stretched on towards the door from the very mantel-piece, so as to defend the flank of Captain Crick and his valiant wife. They made sundry desperate attempts to break through on their right side, where Mrs. Crick fought, but that stout Amazonian woman dealt her blows with such amazing vigour and effect, that she not only gave these fellows some very awkward knocks,

but brought the servant-maid from her bed, who appeared at the head of the stairs in her night-gown, and then fled back with a loud shriek.

This may not seem a very satisfactory succour; but we shall find that it proved so. The battle was now raging with the utmost fury. Two or three shots had been fired, but the officers, baffled by the chair and warming-pan, which were constantly dashed about before their faces, and sometimes the foot of the chair sent with almost annihilating fury into the lower regions of their vitals, did not take any effective aim. The two inferiors, however, who had not been able to testify their valour, were now allowed to come forward, while the principal officers reloaded their pistols, and seizing the foot of the captain's chair, one of them was about to wrest it, if possible, from him, while the other aimed a blow with his truncheon at his head. At this moment one of the other officers rushed forward, and aimed a pistol at the captain, but at the same instant, Arpthorp, the sturdy hostler, roused by the maid, and his access facilitated by the bridge, descended the stairs almost at one leap, and with a poker which he carried, struck the officer such a blow on the arm, that the pistol flew from his grasp, and discharged itself in its fall, while the limb that held it dropped powerless at the officer's side.

Now, then, the melée was renewed with obvious advantage to the Crick troop. Mrs. Crick, who had effectually battered the warming-pan to pieces on the heads of the officers, with occasional resounding blows on walls and staircase, rushed to the fire, hauled thence a large tea kettle, called a tea-kitchen, which always stood with boiling water, not only for tea, but for supplying gin and brandy glasses, now discharged the contents of this as freely as she had done those of the warming-pan. It was more than mortal men could endure. The enemy recoiled. The captain and Arpthorp, each armed with a poker, now followed up their advantage, and another moment saw the foe evacuate the house. The captain and his man following close on their heels, the instant that they reached the open air raised a loud war-whoop, which brought from their houses numbers of the vagabond tribe who conveniently

sleep in their clothes, and are ready to take the field without unnecessary delay. Numbers, in fact, were already in the street, roused by the sound of fire-arms and the clangour of the battle, and another minute would have brought them into the rear of the official Philistines. These now seeing their precarious position, mounted their horses with all speed, and galloped off pursued by the yells and imprecations of the élite of Twigg's Houses.

Thus ended the attempt to seize upon Captain Crick. The manner in which he and his man Arpthorp had defended themselves sufficiently convinced the police that they both had seen service of no ordinary kind, and knew how to handle their weapons to the utmost advantage. The next day brought a much stronger body of police from London : but the birds were flown. The captain, his courageous wife, man, and maid, had disappeared. The house was closed, and all search after the fugitives was vain. It was imagined that the captain had made a heavy sacrifice of property by thus being compelled to flee, but when the government attempted to levy fines on the estate of Twigg's Houses for the captain's offence against the excise and other laws, it was found that Twigg's Houses were mortgaged to the uttermost farthing, and that the captain was too much a man of the world to leave any eggs in a nest which he might be called on at a minute's warning to desert.

We have heard from good authority, that the captain, his lady, his man Arpthorp, and all Arpthorp's family, betook themselves to Australia, where Joe Bates, who was shipped thither by government, was applied for by the captain on Joe's arrival, and was awarded to him as a convict servant. The whole of this notorious company were for some time located on the broad plain of Australia Felix, where they ranged for scores of miles with their flocks and herds, and were noted for their dexterity in putting the captain's brand on their neighbours' stray cattle. This adroitness might possibly have occasioned the captain and his clan, some day, to have retreated some hundreds of miles into the interior, with as much speed as he evacuated Twigg's Houses ; but the terror of his name, and that of his band, was, on the other hand, a strong bulwark against the inroads of the

natives, and the loss of a few bullocks, which mysteriously changed their ownership, was winked at, to avoid the greater loss of property, and even life, from the hands of these marauding aborigines. Since then, it is more than probable that the captain and his band might be found at the diggings either of Ballarat or Mount Alexander, the life and adventures of which would suit him better than the patriarchal one of a shepherd.

CHAPTER VI.

THE AVENGING ANGEL.—MELDRUM FINDS AN OASIS IN THE DESERT,
AND IS FOUND BY AN ANGEL OF MERCY.

MELDRUM, on escaping from the house of Brassington, made his way through various streets, alleys, and obscure turnings, to a considerable distance. After perceiving no immediate pursuit, he relaxed his pace so as to avoid all appearance of hurry or suspicious agitation; and the further he went, the greater was his confidence in eluding his pursuers for the moment. That he could long escape he scarcely hoped. The fulness of his crime had been now revealed to him by the newspaper which Brassington had read. He was not only a thief but a murderer. True, he was ready in some degree to excuse himself on the latter score, by saying that he had no intention of killing the old lady. It was rather an accident than a purpose: but then, conscience cried, "What business had he there!" The crime of house-breaking had produced this second and more deadly sin. With the revelation of the guilt of blood all the former faith of the wretched man revived in his soul, spite of every reason and sophistic argument, with the force of an eternal conviction. God and nature triumphed over him, and flung him down into the abyss of remorse and torturing terror. Heaven, hell, and a terrible immortality, were shouted into his soul as by a thousand crowding demons. Death he would gladly have plunged into, to avoid death linked to public shame—to quench the fury of his own racking consciousness, but death frightened him back with the vision of a flaming gulph, into which he would only leap if he leapt from earth. Between these terrors of the present and the future he seemed crushed as between two millstones, and his knees knocked against each other, and the cold sweat streamed down his face as he went along. He paused in one place, and grasped a post to keep him from falling. A fellow going past said—

"Well, old boy, that's pretty early in the morning for a priming!" and went on with a grin.

Meldrum roused himself to proceed. Like the devils, he believed and trembled, and of all the forms of misery that the wide and miserable earth can furnish, there was not, that day, one which could surpass, in the agony and bloody sweat of mental torture, that of the murderer Meldrum.

But about noon the miserable man found himself in the midst of a dense mass of houses lying between the Ratcliff-highway and the Commercial-road. He was in a little street that seemed involved in such a labyrinth of other close streets that he could hope to find no place in London more obscure. Here, in a row of houses of much older aspect than many of the rest, he spied a paper in a window announcing a room to let. The house in which this was was one of three stories, or more properly two, with an attic in the roof. Each story had one widish horizontal window, that in the roof a dormer one. In the lowest window, which was filled with geraniums, trained on a sort of a ladder, and of such a size that they seemed to fill every inch of the window space, was hung in the centre this card of announcement to let.

Meldrum surveyed the house for some minutes, looked round at the character of the street, and ventured at length to knock at the door and ask the price of the room. The house had an air of superior neatness to any of the rest. They were all conspicuous for their dingy old brick-work—their long unpainted and dilapidated wood-work, and their broken windows supplied with paper panes. This house was neatly painted, and its panes not only of glass, but sound and bright. There was nothing which it had in common with the rest but its style of build, its age, and its having two or three birds hung in cages out of the chamber window; for nothing is so extraordinary as the number of birds kept by the lowest and most miserable population of London. Bird-cages, filth, and swarms of unemployed and squalid people—men, women, and children—are the great features of the worst districts of this human wilderness.

The door was opened by a young woman as bright and cheery-looking as the house. Meldrum half shrunk back at such a vision of innocence and happiness; but the young

woman, after giving him an enquiring look, asked him what he wanted, and without hesitation led him up to the attic ; told him the price,—two shillings a week ; and on his saying he would have it, took him down again, and calling out “Mrs. Brentnal !” an elderly and grave woman came to the door of the sitting-room. Meldrum’s wish being stated to the elderly dame, she scrutinized him somewhat severely, and questioned him as to who and whence he was. Meldrum represented himself as a countryman without work, trying to get it about the docks. The old woman made obstacles : said she was very particular in the lodgers she took in, and never liked one who could not give a near reference. It was plain to Meldrum that she took an unfavourable view of him. He was evidently much cast down by it, and saying he could give no reference that would be in time to serve him, had his foot on the doorstep to go out, when the young woman whispered something to the other, and was apparently pleading for him. He heard the old dame say,—

“ Better not, Nancy, better not !” But the young woman did not give way, and the old one said, “ Well, well, as you will—only mind what I say—one day you will have to repent of being so easy ;” and turning to Meldrum, she added, “ Well, man, you can have the room for this week, and we shall see.”

Installed in his attic, if Meldrum had had an easy conscience he would have thought himself in paradise : all was so neat and clean. He soon had a fire burning, and had arranged to have his meals with the inmates at a certain price. He had kept his old great coat closely buttoned over his sailor’s dress, and towards evening he went out and purchased a suit of strong clothes, jacket and trowsers, and a short white slop fit for a porter or workman about the docks. His sailor’s suit he carefully conveyed away and disposed of at a pawnbroker’s in a distant locality ; and it was well, for he soon found that he was in a sailor’s house.

The bright and handsome little woman who had first let him in was the wife of a sailor, honest John Tulloch, now on his regular voyage to the coast of Africa, for gum. His wife, this happy looking creature, was the soul of this little house. It was she who had brightened up its inside and its

outside ; had cultivated the plants, and purchased the birds, and made everything as clean as if the abode stood out in the fields of the country, instead of in this dense and smoky part of the huge Babylon. She had two children ; one a fine sturdy lad of some three or four years old, and a little child that crawled about over the carpet, and was every now and then snatched up by its mother and half smothered with kisses, and tossed and shaken about till it laughed as merrily as the blithe mother herself. Mrs. Tulloch, or Nancy Tulloch, as the old woman called her, was the very soul of sunshiny happiness. She was always working and singing, or singing and talking to her children and the old woman. She was planning this and that against uncle John came home—which uncle John was no other than her own husband. What was odd enough was, that the old woman called him uncle John too ; and it was some time before Meldrum discovered the reason, which was no other than that John Tulloch had a brother living across the water, in Rotherhithe, a plumber and glazier, where John Tulloch had first been called by this name amongst the numerous children with whom he was an immense favourite, always bringing them something in his capacious jacket pockets, and telling them the wonders he saw in his voyages, and on the barbarous shores where his ship's business took him. John Tulloch had been brought up to the trade of a plumber and glazier himself, and during the time his ship lay in port he used to go and work for his brother, who was in a considerable way of business.

Nancy Tulloch, who seemed to adore her uncle John, that is, her husband, was always keeping things in order, and setting them in order, all the time he was away, in the prospect of his return. He usually made a voyage to Senegal and back in five or six months, and then lay in port a month or more, and off again, and it seemed the desire of his wife to crowd into the month's stay as much pleasure and affection as should make up for the five months' absence. The little sitting-room was snug as carpets, chests of drawers, looking-glasses, and little pictures could make it. She called it her cottage, her retreat; and the old woman sat and knitted in a corner, between the fireplace and the window full of its geraniums, in a tall-backed Windsor chair, with a cushion of scarlet stuff.

Meldrum soon found that he had got into a little heaven upon earth, which only the more pointed and aggravated his own

foul misery. Nancy Tulloch, you would have thought, had never known anything of the cares or blights of this world. She seemed all happiness, cheerfulness, kindness, and sympathy. She was bent on helping Meldrum to some employment. She asked him about his past life, and soon saw that there was something on his mind that he did not wish should come to daylight : but this only seemed to increase her desire to help him. She told him if a man like him was in earnest he would, before long, get something to do ; and hoped he was religious. At this Meldrum shook his head and was silent. Mrs. Tulloch looked at him with more seriousness than she had ever yet assumed ; and the old dame, Mrs. Brentnal, gave him a searching glance that went to the bottom of his dark heart, for it told him that she still had suspicions of him.

But Nancy Tulloch's interest only rose in his behalf : she told him that if he was not religious she hoped he would become so, and invited him to accompany them on Sunday to hear a preacher in their own court—Mr. Zealous Scattergood, whom she represented as one of the excellent of the earth, a poor man's preacher, and none of your grand men that were too grand to follow their Divine Master, and preach to the needy and the very outcast.

Meldrum, who went by the name of Jabez Baxter, was silent, and did not give much encouragement to these invitations, for he had only too many reasons for wishing to avoid the crowd of a chapel and the searching queries of a minister. Every hour that he witnessed the goodness and the happiness of the two women of this house, and listened to their conversation, only the more drove the daggers of remorse deeper into his soul. He was like one of the damned who had intruded amongst the children of God, and expected every moment to be struck down by a thunderbolt and cast out with shame. He avoided therefore, as much as possible, spending any time, except at his meals, with them. He went out cautiously on pretence of seeking work, and traversed the vast human desert that stretched around. On one of these occasions he discovered his son Job at a butcher's shop in Whitechapel. He was a rosy and jolly-looking fellow, as gaily serving his master's customers in his blue coat and white sleeves as if he had known nothing in life but plain sailing and sunny weather. Meldrum felt a strong

desire to go up to him and make himself known, and enquire after Sampson and Dinah : but it was not till he had gone there again and again that he could muster up courage. His crimes lay heavily on him ; and though he knew that Job, as well as the rest of his children, had imbibed the worst infidel notions, he was struck with horror at the very possibility of their knowing his real deeds, and of their upbraiding him with them.

One evening, however, watching his opportunity, when no customers were about, and Job with his knife in his hand had gone out across the broad pavement, and stood on the curb-stone as if contemplating the omnibuses and other vehicles driving along the middle of the street, the wretched father approached ; and standing near the son, said, “Job ! don’t you know me?”

The young butcher turned, and looking at the strange man for a moment, said, “Know you ! how the devil should I know you ? But the —— ! what !” he added, staring in a horrified astonishment—“is it you ? What !”—and for a moment the power of utterance seemed taken from him—“the devil ! do *you* venture to show yourself in the light ? By all the powers alive, man—for father I won’t call you—begone ! never show yourself again here ; or I’ll stick this knife into you as soon as look at you.”

Meldrum would have spoken, but the son motioned him with a quick movement of the hand holding the knife to be off : “Begone !” he repeated, “this moment ! There are foul suspicions about you—and”—coming close to his ear—“I believe them ; and I will be the first to give you up if ever you come near *me* again !”

“But, for the mercy of God !” implored Meldrum—“tell me something ; just a word about Dinah and Sampson.”

“Begone, I say, quick ! I can tell you nothing that you’ll like to hear. They curse you, and wish you at the d——l ; and there you’ll be pretty soon if you come and ruin us with your Satan’s presence.”

The young man went hastily away into the shop whistling, but it was angrily, as he went ; and Meldrum stole away with the torment of the damned in his bosom. He was hated and cursed by his own children ; and yet he dared to pollute with his daily presence the abode of the virtuous and the

happy. The very next time that he passed the butcher's shop in Whitechapel he missed his son : he went again, and again ; he was never there. It was clear that he had suddenly quitted his place to avoid any further recognition of this abhorred parent. Meldrum ventured to approach the shop and enquire. The boy in the shop knew no such person as Job Meldrum : there had never been any such name there ; but a young fellow of the name of Flint had gone off at a moment's notice, and they could not tell where. The very name of Meldrum was shunned : it was a vile badge that his children renounced as they did him.

The whole sum of money which Meldrum had got by robbing the old lady was but fifteen sovereigns. He had purchased two suits of clothes and a great coat out of it : it was fast diminishing ; and he began to tremble at the idea of being compelled to work in company, where any moment he might be detected and seized. To add to his horror, his old drab suit, which he had sunk in the Thames, had been rolled up with the tide and left on the strand, not far from King Edward's stairs, a considerable height above the place where he had flung them in. Whether they had been caught by the anchor of some vessel, or how they had been dragged up the stream, was a mystery ; but there they were found, unrolled, and soon conveyed to the nearest police-station, where they were hung on a line in the court, and a notice of the fact inserted in the newspapers. The notice attracted the eye of old Brassington, who hastened to see them, and putting one thing to another was convinced that they were the very drab suit of Meldrum, the Berkshire murderer. The belief became also strong amongst the police, and the situation of Meldrum was growing desperate. His funds were ebbing, his identity coming ever nearer to the light ; he began to think seriously of going off into the country, and leaving London as far as possible behind.

In the meantime Nancy Tulloch did not abate in her desire to serve him, in her endeavours to get him to the chapel of Zealous Scattergood, or to dive somewhat more deeply into his real history. She did a deal of needlework for a house in the city, and she told him that she had been enquiring, and with some hope of success, for some employment in the warehouse : for it was that of a manufacturer.

Meldrum shrunk into himself at the very idea, and as carefully avoided the chapel of Zealous Scattergood. In the conversation with Mrs. Tulloch he did not conceal that he had a heavy weight on his mind—that he did not believe he should be saved—that he had, in fact, a degree of blood-guiltiness on his conscience; though he led them to believe that it was incurred in some affray with poachers.

All this, though it seemed to close the heart of the old dame, Mrs. Brentnal, against him—though her countenance grew more severe, and her manner more cold and distant—only served the more to excite the sympathy of kind Nancy Tulloch, and her zeal to bring him into the way of what she termed saving grace. For this purpose she would often of an evening, when Mrs. Brentnal was gone to see a neighbour, and the children were in bed, set to and attack Meldrum with all the force of her gentle and kindly zeal. She would tell him that there was no sinner so great nor so foul that he might not be saved: that she was sure if he could see Mr. Scattergood, and open his heart to him, he would soon have hope and become a happy man. Her own good little soul seemed to expand and embrace on behalf of the Deity all that was fallen and miserable. Meldrum would put his hands to his face, and resting his elbows on his knees, weep like a child; but for all that he never seemed nearer consenting to enter the chapel or to seeing Zealous Scattergood. His prospects seemed closing in London—he was contemplating a sudden start and a long run: yet he did not seem as if he could cut himself loose from this spot, and carry his project into execution.

One day when he came down to tea he was somewhat startled to find a stranger there. This was startling to him, because he had begged Mrs. Tulloch when they had any one to let him know, that he might keep away. The stranger was an old man, of at least seventy. He was remarkably thin, and his face was long, pale, and emaciated; his eyes large and grey, beneath grey shaggy eyebrows, and his hair as white as snow. As Meldrum entered he fixed his large grey eyes on him; and coming forward with a faint smile offered Meldrum his hand, saying, “ Well, friend Baxter, as Mrs. Tulloch tells me she cannot prevail on you to come and see me I have come

to see you. I hope we shall become friends when we know each other."

It was Zealous Scattergood ; Meldrum felt it in an instant, even before Mrs. Tulloch pronounced his name. A strong sensation went through him. The worn black suit of the old minister, his manner, his deep bass voice, and peculiar intonation, all brought back people, things, and days long gone, and cut off by subsequent events as by an impassable gulph from the present. Meldrum seated himself without a word, and listened to the religious conversation that went on between the others, as a doomed spirit may be supposed to listen. Every word was a pang to him. He believed now, but he believed without hope. He seemed to lift his eyes like Dives, from a region of flame, and see afar off the shining promontory of heaven, and his wife and former friends walking there and shedding celestial tears over his fall. He ventured only once or twice to raise his eyes to the countenance of the minister, and when his eyes met those of the old man, his evidently turned away as in fear of him. It was a hopeless and a miserable scene, and Meldrum got away as soon as he could.

The guilty man resolved to hasten his departure from this torturing place ; yet he still lingered. He once stole quietly on the Sunday evening down to the bottom of the court, and sent a glance into the chapel where Zealous Scattergood was preaching, and where Mrs. Brentnal and Nancy Tulloch were listeners.

The chapel was merely the last house of the row, converted into a chapel. It was of the humblest description. The preacher's pulpit consisted of a large packing-case, laid lengthwise on the floor, in the farthest corner of the apartment, with a small table in front for a reading-desk, and a chair set in the corner for the preacher occasionally to rest upon. The floor was occupied by plain benches, crowded with people, and the bare walls were furnished with the simplest tin candlesticks for lighting up the place. By the door stood a bread board as a sort of screen, and looking from behind this, and protected by this part of the chapel being in deep shadow, Meldrum could survey the whole scene unobserved.

The old, thin, and melancholy preacher had just risen to

commence his sermon. He stood with his Bible in his hand, and casting a solemn glance over his humble audience he said,—“ In the book of the Prophet Jeremiah, in the twelfth chapter, and twenty-fifth verse, you will find these words :—‘ And I will give thee into the hand of them who seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest.’ ” The words fell like an ice-bolt on the heart of Meldrum: his knees trembled, but he stood rooted to the spot; and the preacher, solemn and slow at first, went on in his deep voice to describe the state and progress of a sinner, which did not seem to bear much resemblance or application to the case of Meldrum. But anon, the spirit of the old man kindled within him: he grew warm and eager in his expressions, his features, and his gestures: he seemed to rise in height, and expand; and his voice rolled like low thunder over the awe-struck and profoundly silent group, from which a sigh or a groan only now and then escaped. He went on and described the fall of an apostate, his last state growing seven times worse than the first from which he had once been redeemed; the demons of disbelief taking possession of his soul, and foul spirits of robbery and murder following after. The old man’s eyes seemed to turn their gaze inward for a while. There was a glazed and a ghostly look about them: he stretched forth his hand over the audience, and seemed to describe some one whom he had once seen and known; but it was Meldrum to the life. He described the height of peace and virtue from which he had fallen: he followed through dark and errant ways, and he shuddered as he described scenes of violence in which he had been engaged, and passed over others that were too horrible.. The perspiration stood in large drops on his flushed and broad forehead, and suddenly recalling himself, as it were from his inward trance, he paused—and wiped his heated forehead; and gazing round on his audience, he asked in a voice suddenly dropped into a different key,—“ My brethren, why is it that I have been thus led, as it were, into the life and the spirit of some other man? Why have this darkness and this horror been shed over me? Can there be any one within hearing of my voice to whom this has been sent as a warning? Can any one here have been tempted in this manner, and to —.” He

again paused ; and as he again said,—“Let us change this subject—let us contemplate the goodness and the mercies of God”—the excited audience, as if suddenly relieved from the horrible oppression of a nightmare, drew a deep simultaneous breath ; and as there was a general movement, as of relief from the tension of their feelings, they heard some one suddenly start from the door, and the broad figure of a man in the shadow was caught by the eyes of several as it hurried away. It was Meldrum, who, struck as with a judgment from heaven, was rushing away, to flee if possible from himself.

From that hour no mortal power could have prevailed on the conscious-stricken criminal to approach the chapel of Zealous Scattergood. Never would he, if he could have helped it, see him or be near him : but not the less did Zealous seek him, and endeavour to enter into his mind, and breathe consolation into it. Sitting by his side in his little room, or below with Nancy Tulloch busy with her needle, and yet ever and anon casting glances of the most genuine interest at him and at the unhappy man that he would fain melt, and soften, and save, did the good old preacher, in the gentlest and most affectionate manner, reason with him, and lay before him all the infinite mercies and goodness of the Creator. In this intercourse he was as different as possible to what Meldrum had seen him in the pulpit. Here he was all humility and loving-kindness, and seemed to place himself as low in his own estimation as the sinner, and exalt only the heavenly grace and charity. But to Meldrum this only brought agonies and despair: he believed himself beyond all redemption, and vowed a thousand times to fly from this place and people : yet still lingered on.

One day Nancy Tulloch came with a nimble step and a glowing face up to his door as she returned from the city, and informed him that she had procured him work. He was to be porter at the warehouse of the great manufacturer, for whose lady she did so much needlework. She had spoken of him both to the lady and her husband, and had interested them about him. She had told them she was sure some heavy sin lay on his heart : she believed it to be the death of a keeper : but she gave such a character of him, for the time she had seen him, that these good people, whose religion

taught reformation and salvation, rather than vengeance and hopeless rejection, were quite willing to try him; and now was the vacancy.

Meldrum thanked his kind benefactor warmly, but shrunk from accepting the offered employment: he dreaded such a public employment as that of porter—who might not recognise him? and then there was nothing for it but the gallows! He thought a thousand times,—Oh, if he could but be condemned to some private cell and the most heavy labour, with what alacrity would he give himself up, and with what zeal would he spend his strength in the fulfilment of his doom; but to be dragged before all the world to the accursed gallows! No, he would rather suffer ten deaths, run the risk of committing ten other crimes first. Yet, if he fled into the country what casual circumstance might not some day betray him? What was to enable him to endure the torture that every day consumed his vitals? Again, he thought on the various means of self-destruction; and again he shrunk—and finally dared the risk, and took the place offered him by Nancy Tulloch.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HISTORY OF ZEALOUS SCATTERGOOD.

HAVING got Meldrum into such respectable employment, let us now take a somewhat closer view of the friends who thus interested themselves in his behalf.

In the first place, the old preacher, Zealous Scattergood, was perhaps unlike any other man of his profession throughout Great Britain. He stood alone, both in character and position. Though he was a Baptist, yet he belonged not to that sect, held no communication with any of its ministers ; he pursued his way alone, and voluntarily sought out the poor and the neglected, and became their minister. There was scarcely a part of England in which he had not pursued his labours. He had been at work amongst the miners of Cornwall and the colliers of Durham, amongst the clod-hoppers of Wiltshire, and the stockingers of Nottingham. He might be truly called a wanderer and a sojourner, having no abiding city here. There were some parts of his history that no mortal could penetrate into ; but there was enough come to the light to shew that he had at one time, many years ago, been the happy head of a happy family. That family was now all dispersed or dead ;—he was a solitary pilgrim on the earth. There was a flitting, shadow-like character about him : he shrunk from the “broadway and the green” into the narrow paths, the obscurities of life : he avoided the wealthy and the proud, and seemed at home only amongst the poor, for whom he laboured incessantly, subsisting on a meagre pittance of their subscription. With tastes of a high and refined order, and having read and thought much, yet he never seemed at ease amongst the wealthier classes who could better understand his higher tastes, and estimate his uncommon acquirements. If he unexpectedly found himself amongst them, he became silent,

shut up, and as soon as possible stole quietly away. It was only when you could get him out into a country walk, or when in his pulpit, or labouring to enlighten the dark minds that only too thickly abound everywhere, that he seemed to forget a kind of timidity—a suspicion—an embarrassment—and become the man and the valiant Christian.

More than one of our men of literary fame have come across this singular man, in one part or other of the country. They have met him with his "Quarles' Emblems," his "Milton" or "Herrick" in his hands, and have been equally astonished and delighted at the beauty of his conversation and his enthusiastic love of nature. One poet has recorded such a meeting in verses which have fallen into our hands.

TO ZEALOUS SCATTERGOOD.

My friend ! there have been men
 To whom we turn again,
 After contemplating the present age,
 And long with vain regret
 That they were living yet,
 Virtue's high war triumphantly to wage.

Men whose renown was built
 Not through resplendent guilt ;
 Not through life's waste, or the abuse of power ;
 But by the dauntless zeal
 With which, at Truth's appeal,
 They stood, even to death, in some eventful hour.

But he who now shall dream,
 Because amongst us seem,
 No dubious symptoms of a realm's decline,
 Wealth, mad with its excess,
 Mid far-diffused distress,
 And luxury sapping where it should refine.

He who deems hence shall flow
 The utter overthrow
 Of this most famous and long happy land,
 Little knows he what lies,
 Even beneath his eyes,
 Slumbering in forms that round about him stand.

Little knows he the zeal
 Myriads of spirits feel
 In love, pure principle, and knowledge strong :
 Little knows he what men
 Tread this dear land again,
 Whose unambitious hearts invigorate the throng.

My friend ! I lay with thee
 Beneath the forest tree,
 When spring was shedding her first sweets around ;
 And the bright sky above
 Woke feelings of deep love
 And thoughts which soared into the blue profound.

I lay—and as I heard
 The joyful faith thus stirred
 Poured in warm words from thy experienced breast,
 Such was the buoyant thought
 That in my bosom wrought,
 And rising in its strength, my native land I blest.

It is easy to perceive from these stanzas what topics had occupied the rural musers ; but it is not so easy for any one who did not know him to imagine the zeal and eloquent ardour of the old man on such occasions. Once out in the fields and woods, he was a boy again. He actually ran and leaped ; and some beautiful scene, some flower, as that of the blushing wilding in the early spring, would fill him with rapture, till the old Puritanic leaven of his sectarian education would make him fear lest it were sinful to be so happy. On one occasion, wandering in the Peak of Derbyshire, he met with a young evangelical clergyman in Dove Dale, and the young man, struck, as was no wonder, at the venerable aspect of the old pilgrim father, and seeing him gazing with evident enthusiasm on the different objects in that beautiful valley, entered into conversation with him, and was soon as much struck by his literary knowledge, his deep religious experience, and his profound love of the great and beautiful. The old man and the young traversed the whole Dale together, and spent nearly the whole day in its caverns, sitting on the green sward beside its clear swift waters, engaged in absorbing talk on many topics of the life and prospects of

man ; and, ever and anon, again starting forward and noting the ever-changing and singular features of the place. To such a pitch of enthusiasm did they work themselves by these means, that they sung a hymn together in one cavern, knelt down and prayed together in another, and then by mutual agreement returned each to his own home, from the conviction that they had filled themselves as full of spiritual and intellectual enjoyment as man was capable of, or as was good for him.

Such was old Zealous Scattergood where he had only God and nature to stand face to face with, for he knew that they are both charitable, and never misinterpret, and never indulge malice under the show of godly zeal. With them, and some noble-hearted being in their presence, and where the voice of slander could not come, there was Zealous Scattergood bold, open, poetical, and wise. But meet him in the city—had this young clergyman met him there afterwards he would have seen with astonishment—the same old man timidly recognise his greeting, and as soon as possible steal away and begone.

And how was this ? What occasioned this extraordinary phenomenon ? It may be explained—and we have it in our power to explain it. Zealous Scattergood, in the course of a long life, had made one lapse in the path of strict rectitude ; and its consequences pursued him, and he knew that they would pursue him to the grave. Bitterly had he repented of that one weak act, fervently and for years had he prayed the God of mercy and love to forgive this one error ; and believed that it was forgiven. God and Christ in his own heart had said to him long ago,—“ Go thy way and sin no more—thy sin is forgiven thee.” But his fellow-men, each of whom had been bade, if without sin, to cast the first stone, had not, like the sinners of old, retired ashamed from the presence of the divine judge. Full of sins themselves, they had not hesitated a moment each to fling his stone of accusation and injury, but they had continued to fling their stones to the last hour, whenever they could meet with him. Zealous Scattergood knew that the love- and faith-professing world would never cease to pursue him with its calumny, shaped as a righteous scorn, and he slunk away from before it, and sought to work amid the shadows of the earth,

where he could at once hide himself and render them less black.

Zealous Scattergood was educated for a Baptist minister. For many years he was located as the minister of a populous country village, and the hamlets around, to which he made his periodical visits. He was married, and had a numerous family. For some years he laboured and struggled on, but the long-continued sickness of his wife, and the necessity of getting his great boys out into trades, pressed on him to a degree that became insupportable. He had been compelled to borrow money of one of the members of his congregation, who, when he was least able to pay, came to have pressing need of it himself. Zealous was driven to despair: he looked round and pondered all means and prospects of help: he saw none.

At this moment he resolved to look out for a better location. He conned the advertisements on the fly-leaves of their religious magazines, and saw that a pulpit was vacant in a populous town, and that a call was made for ministers to officiate on trial. There was, however, one serious obstacle—the vacancy was in an Independent congregation, and Zealous was a Baptist. It was a terrible temptation. In all points of religious faith the two sects were exactly alike, except in some particulars regarding the rite of Baptism. Zealous said to himself—“On every great moral and religious point I could preach to them from my heart; and this baptismal difference—what is it? He hung upon the advantages of a higher salary, the more extended field of labour; and the pressure of his necessities, more eloquent than a host of arguments, made him persuade himself that he could accept and conscientiously fulfil the office. He wavered, and he fell. He wrote to offer his services, went on trial, and succeeded. His services were declared most satisfactory, and he was formally elected by the congregation.

How it happened that he had obtained credentials of recommendation from his own old congregation—how they had come to imagine it a Baptist Church to which Zealous had this call—and how the Independent congregation in the town had been so uncircumspect as not to ascertain that it was a Baptist people from whom Zealous came, are points

unknown to us ; but the fact is certain, that by some means these particulars were not nicely scrutinized, and that Zealous was installed the minister of a large congregation, with a salary triple in amount to that on which he had been starving.

But it was not long before the fatal discovery was made. There came a rumour,—then came a man, who, to make sure, placed himself just in front of Zealous's pulpit during one Sunday morning service. There was a closeting with the elders afterwards in the vestry, and never was there such a sudden stir, buzz, and alarm. It was like the swarming of a beehive. The whole congregation was in a tremor and agitation of astonishment and indignation. There were terms flying from mouth to mouth of—Oh ! the vile monster—the Judas ! the impostor ! Oh ! the abominable hypocrite ! the Ananias and Sapphira both in one ! the wretch ! the demon ! the brazen serpent of damnation—lying thus before God himself ! Oh, what perjury and perfidy, and perdition ! It was the awful, unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost ! Many wondered that the pulpit had not been struck by a thunderbolt as the vile reprobate was in it, and the whole chapel and congregation been consumed with him. They rushed away out of it at the very idea.

In the meantime poor Zealous had fled before the tempest : he had gone, heaping as many maledictions on his own head as all the exasperated congregation had done together. He now seemed to see all the foulness of his crime himself. He believed himself lost for ever. He loathed and despised himself. Where he hid and whither he went, no one knows ; but he did not venture home. There came the news like a blast of death : and it was one. In a very few days Zealous's wife was stretched in her coffin ; and his family was left utterly destitute.

Zealous could not be very distant from his home; for at this news he entered the village at midnight, and flung himself in a paroxysm of grief on his wife's grave. A poor woman who was nursing a sick child, and whose window overlooked the churchyard, was standing at the open casement giving the feverish little creature air, when she saw a dark figure come up the churchyard path, and looking here and there, at length spring rapidly forward to the new-made grave of

Mrs. Scattergood, and, dashing himself down upon it, began to tear his hair, and groan and cry terribly. The woman at once comprehended who it was. The night was moonlight, though wild and cloudy in the late autumn, and the grave was not many yards from her window. She described the scene as the most terrible imaginable: that the poor man tore up the very earth in his agony, and called, as she said, on both God and Devil to annihilate him. The woman was riveted by horror to the spot; she gave a wild cry at what she saw and heard, and the unhappy man suddenly started to his feet, and fled away without once looking back.

Poor Scattergood was found wandering in the fields some miles distant in a state of utter derangement. He was a wild maniac, and was fled from with horror by those who first saw him; but was afterwards captured, and conveyed to the parish workhouse. In this place he continued for many months, and passed from a condition of furious madness to one of childish imbecility. It was only after he had in some degree recovered his mind, and an outward degree of serenity, that he contrived to escape, and disappeared for some years. How and where he lived during this period is not known. When he was again recognised, it was in a sea-port town in a distant part of the kingdom, where he was labouring amongst the lowest poor, as he had ever since continued to labour.

His children had been assisted by some relatives, and both sons and daughters were now in good though humble situations, earning their livelihood. For Zealous himself, he had repented in dust and ashes. He had truly passed through the fiery furnace of affliction and self-condemnation, and he felt now that he was forgiven in heaven, but that he never should be on earth. He knew that the one evil hour of his life would embitter the whole of his existence—that the fame of that deed would follow him to the ends of the earth; and he resolved to bear, as a just punishment, all the evils that it could bring him, and to go on labouring for those who had none else to help them, so long as he should continue on earth. His cheeks were become thin and colourless, his eyes dim and deep set, and his hair as white as snow.

And he had not been deceived in the amount of persecution he was doomed to suffer. He fixed himself

down in various neglected spots, and was beginning to draw the moral chaos into some degree of light and order, to disentangle the elements of truth and virtue from those of crime and gross sensualism, when some accident was sure to arrest him in his labour, and drive him forth with ignominy. Some stranger recognised him, and gave *his* account of him ; some letter arrived to put the people on their guard. The doers and writers of these things thought they did God service ; they took neither time nor pains to ascertain whether the frail brother had not suffered, and been baptized in affliction to genuine repentance and newness of life. With them he was a hypocrite and an impostor ; and it was a work of virtue to unmask and chase him forth. God saw and approved of all his humble contriteness, and his work of love ; but man saw only, and would see only, a minister of hypocrisy and deceit doing the works of God for a bit of bread. It was in vain that he appealed to the works which he did, and the life which he led ; they never stood a moment against the breath of calumny : those who had seen him, and known him for years progress, shrunk from him and gave him up.

Once did the old man imagine that he had found a firm hold of true hearts, and a harbour for life. An aged and worthy person in a stern wild region of Yorkshire had built a chapel, and given a salary for a minister. This office Zealous had succeeded in obtaining. Here all was to his taste,—a simple people, a wild country, whose bold features seized on his imagination and soothed his mind ; and the old worthy couple growing daily more attached to him, and putting the deepest trust in him. For twelve months had he continued here : the old people congratulated themselves on the acquisition of such a friend, and Zealous not only taught well from the pulpit, but taught the children in the chapel, which he made a school of in the week. The neighbourhood was rapidly improving : but here even penetrated the eye of the slanderous enemy. Some one, on a journey of business, hearing in a neighbouring manufacturing town of the labours and success of the minister, thought he recognised who it was—came over—and found it even so.

Even here, all that Zealous had done availed nothing. Many a time had he thought of opening his past life, and

showing his own fatal error to his aged patrons : but the misery of the subject had prevented him. Now the enemy did it for him, and effectually. There was a cloud on the faces of his friends the next time that he saw them ; they upbraided him with deceiving them, and demanded the keys of the cottage and the chapel.

Zealous resigned them on the instant ; but it was with a pang. He explained with tears, and words instinct with repentance, his whole history,—but it was now too late. He had again lost a home, a people, and friends, such as he did not hope to meet with again.

Some time afterwards he was found by one of the few of those who had known him before, and who gave him credit for being all that he was, in a rude hamlet amongst the hills of Durham. It was in the midst of a collier population. He had again drawn round him a poor but zealous congregation, and was living like an old prophet in a sort of chamber on the wall.

At the end of a close court of houses, you ascended by a ladder to his abode, and proceeding round to the other side of the dwelling, where the entrance was, it was found that the ground there was the height of the second story, and that the old man's cottage faced into a garden which was bounded by high, wild uplands. Here, in one little room, the old man lived. There were his "Quarles," his "Milton," his "Herrick," and his bed. On a line in the garden hung his old thread-bare suit of black, which had been rubbed with some liquid which the poor know as a refresher to the dye, and it was now sweetening in the hill breezes.

Here the old man spoke as feelingly as ever of the beauties of the surrounding country, which he had traversed in all directions, and offered to traverse again with his friend ; of their favourite authors, and his labours for the people. But soon after this he was ejected by the old causes from this obscure retreat ; and, wearied of the country, he made a long flight southward, and had been now for some time labouring where we have found him in London.

But even here he could not have maintained his ground except for one stout little heart, that of Nancy Tulloch. The old story had reached her in this court, and he would have had to march forth had not this courageous little woman

bade the people look at what Zealous Scattergood had done, and not listen to his enemies of what he had done somewhere, some forty years before. She asked who amongst them there was who, at some moment of their life, had not done what they repented of; and who amongst them could point to a constant life of labour and care for others? Where could they look for a man who would instruct and comfort them, and educate their children, like Zealous Scattergood? Were there not times and seasons of difficulty in which they had to look back for their deliverance to his disinterested and indefatigable kindness?

The tide of feeling was turned into the channels of charity and gratitude. Their memories were awake to acts of sympathy and zeal, which cast out and made innocuous the venom of slander. The crisis was past, a triumph was achieved, and Zealous Scattergood had at length found real friends and a resting-place.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT NANCY TULLOCH.

BUT how came it that Nancy Tulloch was thus proof to the almost omnipotent power of slander—that she rose above the multitude thus brilliantly in the breadth of her charity—that she was courageous enough to defy the world and its vindictive spirit of persecution on the plea of virtue and propriety? To understand this we must go a little into her history.

Nancy Tulloch, like Zealous Scattergood, had learnt charity through suffering. Bright and happy as she seemed to be and was, there was an epoch in her history known only to her husband and Mrs. Brentnal, which had made her ready to forgive the failings of others, and to feel for the injured with a quickness of sympathy which had the true spirit of heroism in it. Gay at heart, and full of happiness as she seemed now, she had been at one terrible crisis driven by misery to the very threshold of self-destruction. A friendly hand had plucked her from it; and that hand was honest John Tulloch's. It was the spirit with which this had inspired her that had made her active in the behalf of Meldrum, though Meldrum never knew the slightest portion of the real cause. Nancy Tulloch, like our Saviour, could go a long way to seek and save that which was lost; and where she did not see an actual malignity of nature, she was unwilling to despair of any one, or to abandon her desire for his restoration. Zealous Scattergood had laid open his whole history to her, and she saw, in his persecutions even, the benevolent finger of God; for they had compelled him into a steady minister and counsellor of the poor, by closing all higher avenues of exertion against him, if higher there can be.

Nancy Tulloch was one of the numerous family of a small

farmer in Dorsetshire. As she was growing into womanhood penury was pressing with an iron force on her father. He had gradually grown poorer on his few highly rented acres : he was in arrears with his landlord, and threatened with an execution and ejectment ; but not knowing what was to become of him if his wretched farm was taken from him, he struggled on, and laboured incessantly and enormously himself, to do as far as possible without paid labour. Within the house a system of the most rigid economy was practised. There were often painful scenes between her parents when they were pressed with difficulties that they could not cope with. The visits of tax-gatherers, poor-rate collectors, and of the steward for arrears of rent, with the arrival of letters, which her father took up with an air of aversion, and laid down with a curse, made obvious a state of poverty and perplexity that drove all happiness out of the house, and out of life. Her father talked more and more of flinging up the farm and going to the workhouse ; and told the children, who stood in confused silence amid their father's violence and their mother's tears, that they must look out for some service, for he could no longer maintain them at home.

Nancy Tulloch, or rather Nancy Bains, for that was her name, was deeply wounded by these circumstances. She was the oldest of nine children, and yet she was little more than eighteen. She was naturally of a lively and gay disposition, full of spirit, and rendered her mother immense service in the house. She was extremely pretty at the same time, and began to attract much admiration from the young men of the neighbourhood. Spite of this, however, she began to think very much of going out to service, and of going rather into a town, where she should see more of life, than in the hard service of the country. She might have a little pride, too, in not wishing to be a servant where every one knew her. Her mother for some time would not hear of it, saying, what was she to do without her ? But when Nancy saw that things became still worse and worse at home, she thought she could do more for her family by relieving it of her support, and being able to send it part of her wages.

While these things were running in her mind, she one day saw in a London newspaper an advertisement for a

housemaid in a gentleman's family, where there were only himself and his housekeeper ; the wages good, and a healthy young woman, of good character, from the country, preferred. Catching at this as a very likely situation for a commencement, she wrote unknown to her parents, and from the particulars given in reply was induced to engage herself at once. Her parents, though at first somewhat taken by surprise, at length consented, on condition that if she did not find the place all she expected she should not stay.

Away, however, went light-hearted Nancy Bains, and soon reached the house indicated in Lincoln's-inn-fields. The house was no other than that of our old acquaintance, Mr. Woodcroft Meadowlands ; and his housekeeper appeared a large-built, good-looking woman, of fifty, who impressed on Nancy how much she insisted on conduct and character in a girl, especially as her master was a bachelor ; and therefore she preferred a simple-hearted girl out of the country. Nancy was pleased at this disposition of the housekeeper, and found the place extremely easy—a charwoman coming once or twice a week to clean the floors and stairs, and do sundry things that the housemaid might be relieved from them.

Nancy Bains was somewhat surprised that a gentleman like Mr. Meadowlands, who, she was told, was a man of large estate, and had such a fine establishment in the country, should prefer to live in such a very quiet way in town, not even keeping a man-servant, and scarcely being seen at home except in an evening. But why need we prolong a common story ? Nancy found Mr. Meadowlands a very agreeable man, who seemed to be very much pleased with her indeed. It was not long before he began to pay her particular attentions, and brought her several handsome presents. To a girl of her age, and country experience, this was all agreeable enough from a handsome man of Mr. Meadowlands' station : but Nancy was not without a considerable degree of shrewdness, and she grew very uneasy. She resolved to tell the housekeeper of the presents, and to say that she did not altogether feel right about it. She did so ; but the housekeeper only replied, " Pooh, child ! he means you no harm, but he is pleased with your manners ; and what is a present or two to him ?"

This did not satisfy Nancy ; and things began rapidly to assume so dangerous an aspect, that she resolved to quit the place as speedily as possible. Alas, poor Nancy ! she was only one of the simple innocent creatures who are decoyed by the same diabolical means into a prison-house from whence they never escape but with ruin ; and in those cases where there is a high sense of innate virtue, with despair and death. We pass over the horrible story : London can furnish such every day of the week. Enough, that some weeks afterwards Nancy Bains was turned, at a moment's warning, with violence and insult, out of the house of Mr. Woodcroft Meadowlands. A stranger in London, knowing no one, and not daring to reveal her condition to her parents at home, nor yet to go there, the poor girl saw herself with terror standing on the pavement of Lincoln's-inn-fields with the box that contained her whole worldly property. A cab accidentally passing, she called to the man to take her up. He asked where he should drive : she did not know : she said, at length, to the City. Being set down at the corner of a street, she called a porter to carry her box, and as they went along she asked him to show her to some decent lodgings. The man did this very honestly, and in her little room, as soon as she was alone, she flung herself on the bed, and gave way to the excess of her misery. How earnestly did the poor girl pray that she might die,—but such prayers are not heard ; and during several days that she continued here, without stirring out, she thought over and over again in distraction what she should do. One moment she resolved to go to a magistrate, and accuse Mr. Meadowlands of his crimes ; but the monster, conscious of his security, had before warned her of the uselessness and the danger of any such attempt. Against a man of his wealth and station, and with people in his house ready to give evidence *for* him and *against* her, it could only result in a charge of a trick to extort money on her part. It could only bring her exposure, and punishment as an impostor. Such are the securities of the innocent poor against the oppressions and outrage of the sensual rich in a country where it is said law and justice are open to every one. Well did Sydney Smith add,—and so is Mivart's Hotel.

But Nancy Bains' money, far from sufficiency for the

purchase of justice or for entering Mivart's Hotel, would not last her long in her present miserable lodgings. Go home she could not, and would not ; and dreadful as had been the first experiment, she saw nothing for it but seeking another service. But with whom was she to advise ? she knew nobody, and the people of the house did not seem likely to assist her.

In the midst of these agitations she became haunted with a sense of the consequences of her late treatment : she was persuaded that she should become a mother, and stung to madness by the idea, she rushed out and took her way to Lincoln's-inn-fields, and in her desperation knocked at Mr. Meadowlands' door. It was opened by the housekeeper, who, on seeing her, demanded in no very smooth terms what she wanted.

" To see Mr. Meadowlands," she replied.

" To see Mr. Meadowlands !" exclaimed the woman, in terms of unmeasured and indignant astonishment : " how dare you, you impudent baggage, come here and ask any such thing ? Begone ! or I will give you up to the police."

The door was slammed in her face, and the wretched girl, nearly beside herself, ran down the steps and walked away, scarcely conscious of what she did. She soon, however, resolved to watch for Mr. Meadowlands till she saw him. For several evenings she went to and fro before his house ; but in vain. He never came ; and a policeman, who had noticed her promenading here, ordered her off. Still every evening for a week she returned, and went the length of that side of the field to and fro for hours. In one of these walks another young woman accosted her, and asked if she was looking for any one, and if she could assist her. Nancy, who was driven to despair, said frankly, " Yes, she wanted to see Meadowlands, who lived at that house,"—pointing to it.

" Ha, my dear !" replied the young woman, with more feeling than Nancy even in her simplicity expected : " Is it Mr. Meadowlands ? have you ever been in his service ?"

Nancy replied she had.

The young woman then, eyeing her with a peculiar look, said, " And so have I, and I can tell you exactly what has occurred to you. Come along ; that policeman is watching us."

With that she walked on, and in a few minutes opened under Nancy's feet a gulf of terror that seemed to make her very blood stagnate.

Nancy, who had hoped, could she see Mr. Meadowlands, that she could move him to compassion, and induce him to find her some asylum till she could again seek out with a fair chance for an honest service, was now struck to the heart with what she had heard. She saw the full horror of her condition ; and thanking her informant as well as she could, turned away, and made for the City, with a desperation in her soul that could be satisfied with nothing but death. She turned down towards London Bridge, went wildly up to its centre, and looked round her to see if she could mount the parapet and spring off before any one could seize her. But the eyes of a score of passengers seemed upon her ; she cast one glance over the wall down into the dark and dismal depth, and her spirit recoiled. But not the less did she pursue her purpose : she descended the steps near the foot of the Bridge on the City side, and made her way to the Packet wharf. Here, as soon as she saw the gleam of the water, she rushed forward at full speed, to plunge into the river. With a prayer to God for forgiveness in the very act, and a quick and bitter thought of home, she had got within a yard of the brink, when she was arrested by a strong arm which seized the skirts of her gown ; and a sailor, who had been leaning his back against a crane, said, looking her earnestly but kindly in the face—" Whither away, matey, so fast ? I fear you are meaning mischief. Is it not true ?"

Poor Nancy stood as if struck into a pillar of stone. She stared at the sailor, but she uttered not a word ; and the next moment she dropped on the ground as if she were shot dead.

When she again became conscious she found herself sitting on a bench propped on the arm of the same sailor. They were still alone ; and the man said—" There, matey, you are coming about—now don't fluster yourself: take it calmly. You are not well. Something troubles you. Never mind ; we won't talk about it. As soon as you can walk you shall go and have some coffee ; and if John Tulloch can be of any

use to you, why he will, matey, that's all. Come, don't be downcast; cheer up, cheer up! things mend when they come to the worst."

The kind tones of the honest sailor, and his kind conduct, had such an effect on the poor girl under the circumstances that she could do nothing but weep and sob as if her heart would break. It was some time before the sailor could get her to calm herself, and give him some account of herself, at the same time saying that he did not want her to tell him anything but what she pleased; he only wanted to know if he could take her any where, and do any thing for her. When he asked her where her friends lived, it only set her off again, and her distress was so great that the poor sailor was at his wits' end.

"Well, sweetheart," he said at length, "just let me know what I can do. Try to quieten yourself, and say where we shall go to, will you? There's a good girl."

With an effort Nancy now told him enough to let him know that her friends were far off in the country—that she did not know a soul in London—that she had been so shamefully used that she only desired to die; and never could face her friends again. At hearing this the kind sailor said,—

"Well, it is a dreadful place is this London. Come, we will have some coffee, and I will take you to my good old mother, and may be, by and by, one may hit on something to ease your mind and make you wish to live. Cheer up, matey, cheer up, do!"

And, as he said this, he took her gently by the arm and led her to a coffee-house near, where he went into an upper room and ordered coffee for two.

The sailor appeared in the light to be about five-and-thirty, of a round, ruddy countenance, with a considerable bush of brown hair on his head, and a brown beard, that curled up round his chin like a border. His eyes were something large and blue, and he had altogether an air of the most thorough honesty and kindness.

"May be," said he to Nancy, who sat gazing into the fire with a look of despair, "may be, matey, you would like a glass of something strong—but I never take anything stronger than coffee. I'm a temperance man, and belong to

a temperance ship, a temperance captain, and a temperance merchant. But you need a good stiff glass of grog, I think."

Nancy Bains thanked him warmly, but said she should prefer the coffee. It was with great difficulty, however, that John Tulloch could prevail upon her to take any; and it was not till he had, by the kindness and delicate respect of his manner, won something on her attention, that they set out for his mother's, as he called her. As they went along, John said, "I see, matey, plain enough, that you are not one of these town-bred 'uns. You are all right and tight as any little vessel can be, only that you've fallen in with treacherous squalls, and d——d pirates. Never mind—foul to-day, fair to-morrow. Trust in God, and there may be a good voyage yet."

At these words, and especially that "trust in God," and the genuine heart-warm tone in which it was uttered, Nancy felt herself revived. A spirit of confidence awoke in her. She saw that this was a very honest, kind fellow, and in his way religious, and she could not help giving his arm a gentle pressure to her side as they were going along.

"That's right, now, matey! come, that's right!" said the sailor: "Now you can believe me, and so dismiss your fears. I don't wonder at your not believing a stranger all at once—but do you know, I believe, and I hope you do the same, that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without God's will; and I have a notion, and it pleases me, that is was not without his guidance that I was just in your way to-night."

Nancy could only ejaculate—"Thank you, thank you!" for her tears were flowing again as fast as ever: and they went on in silence till they reached the court where we have found them living. Here the door was opened by Mrs. Brentnal, who was no little astonished to see John Tulloch with a young girl on his arm. John, however, entered without ceremony, and said—

"Show this young woman up to the little berth in the upper deck, and let her get to bed; for, poor thing, she needs rest; and, mother, be kind to her."

Mrs. Brentnal looked first at one and then at the other, and appeared to hesitate what to do. But John Tulloch said—

"Quick, mother, quick! don't you see the poor child is almost fainting?—quick, and come down to me, and let's have some supper."

John Tulloch wanted no supper, but he wanted this awkward scene over, and all explained to Mrs. Brentnal. And here we may say, that, though John called Mrs. Brentnal mother, she was no more his mother than he was her uncle John, though she called him so, while he was at least twenty-five years younger than herself.

Mrs. Brentnal had been John's nurse when he was a child. He had always been very fond of her, and though, owing to the misfortunes of his father, who was a wealthy farmer at one time, John and his elder brother had come to London, he never forgot the old woman; and when he heard that her husband was dead, and had left her destitute, he sent for her up to town, and took this house, and made her his housekeeper; though at that time he did not need a house or housekeeper, as he had a room at his brother's in Rotherhithe, and was saving a good deal of money.

Mrs. Brentnal soon came down, and heard John's story, but for some time was not half pleased with the adventure. She pronounced it, at all events, rash and romantic, and wished no ill might come of it. John quietly said, he wished so too:—and there the matter ended for the present.

In the morning he went early over to the ship, which was loading in dock, and was to sail the next week. When he returned at night, Mrs. Brentnal received him with an unusual degree of attention; she had tea on the table, and had got some sally-luns buttered, and his chair set; and scarcely did he open his mouth to ask how the poor girl was, before she was quite officious in replying, that she was a good deal cheered up, poor thing—and a very nice little creature she was.

"You think so, mother?" said John, evidently much pleased. "Then I was not such a fool either. Well, well, it delights me, mother, it delights me; if you think so, all is right."

Over their tea, Mrs. Brentnal soon showed uncle John that she was possessed of all Nancy Bains' story, and that she believed every word of it. She really did believe that the poor girl was as good as she was pretty, but that she

was afraid she would never get over it—she would break her heart with grief.

"But she must get over it," said uncle John; "you musn't let her break her heart—and by jingo! why don't you give her some tea, mother?"

"She's had it, John," said Mrs. Brentnal.

"Well, I might ha' guessed that," replied John Tulloch; "and now we're off next week, and you must take charge of the poor thing till I'm back, and then we'll see what we can do with her friends. But that villain Meadowlands!—if I had but another week or so, rat him! if I wouldn't shoot him, or chop him down, or something of the sort. He should not live—the villain!"

"John Tulloch," said Mrs. Brentnal, "do you want me to see you hanged? Have you lost your senses? Leave the villain to God, who'll punish him, and all such like, in his own time. You frighten me, and I am thankful that you're going; I really am this time, though I never was before."

John continued to vow all sorts of vengeance against the villain Meadowlands, however, till he went to bed, and the same next morning at breakfast. To shorten our story, however, the day arrived for John Tulloch to go on board. Before this, Nancy Bains had recovered something of her spirits. She had got, through Mrs. Brentnal, plenty of needlework, and she sat in her little room stitching away as if it were for her life; and it probably was, for it helped her to get rid of the thoughts that preyed upon her life.

John Tulloch would have her to take her supper with them the night before he sailed; and the sweet looks of poor Nancy, as all gratitude, and ever and anon a gush of irrepressible tears, as he spoke cheerfully to her, made him again inwardly curse that villain Meadowlands, and think what he would do. He had to be on board that night, and so he bade Mrs. Brentnal and Nancy good-by, and told them to be good company till he came back. And with that he gave Nancy a shake of the hand that once more made the tears start to her eyes, and a blessing into her heart, as she hastened upstairs to hide her feelings.

When John Tulloch returned from his voyage, which had been one of unusual duration, he found Nancy Bains still

with Mrs. Brentnal. She had recovered her best looks, though mixed with a degree of gravity that told that sad thoughts lay deep down in her heart. There was a cradle in her little room, and a fine lad sleeping in it ; but between Mrs. Brentnal and Nancy there was a league grown as of mother and daughter. Mrs. Brentnal declared that Nancy was the best little creature that ever was born. She had written down into the country to tell her parents that she had left her first place, as it did not at all suit her, and that she now got plenty of needlework, and was very comfortable. Mrs. Brentnal had also written to them to say Nancy was the best creature that ever was born ; and the mother had written in return that it was very pleasant to hear such good accounts.

Thus all pain had so far been spared them, and their poverty had prevented their coming up, by which any unhappy discovery of the real facts had been prevented. Out of doors Mrs. Brentnal did not find it so easy a matter to satisfy the neighbours as to Nancy's identity. They imagined that she was John Tulloch's wife, and that he did not say so on account of his relations on the other side of the water, who, they fancied, were expecting his money amongst their children. Any other supposition they could not entertain, except at Mrs. Brentnal's expense : but Mrs. Brentnal explained that all was right, and time would show.

And time did show. John Tulloch went two or three voyages, and in the intervals at home he grew more and more fond of Nancy Bains, brought her presents, and would take her out on excursions to Greenwich, which was his favourite resort, where he could talk to the old sailors, and stroll in the Park, and get tea at one of the tea-houses, and the like.

Mrs. Brentnal saw all this, but only with evident pleasure ; and on the third return of John Tulloch he fairly married Nancy Bains, and made an excursion to Gravesend to hold the wedding-dinner,—and yet it was not called a wedding-dinner, for honest John Tulloch pretended to his relations, and every body, that Nancy had long been his wife, aye, long before he brought her home. The reason of this was obvious : he was determined that not a soul but himself and Mrs. Brentnal should know an atom of Nancy's past history.

It would not have been easy for any one but John Tulloch to satisfy his relations for his keeping silence so long ; but as for him, it was quite enough to say that it had been his whim. Had any one been at the trouble to search the registry, they would have found Nancy's little boy registered in her own maiden name : but nobody ever thought of doing it, and the child bore, and will continue to bear, the name of Tulloch to his dying day.

Nancy, by degrees, became the bright, cheerful, happy and excellent creature we have seen her. To love and help were the two great impulses of her heart : sorrow had a sacred power over her that she never tried to break. To honest John Tulloch she seemed bound by ties of gratitude and respect that only deepened her love, and made her his living genius,—always thinking of him and for him ; and the one good deed that he had done in her behalf was repaid by a daily devotion that made his little home in this dingy court more bright to his eye, and his memory, than the brightest scenes of southern coasts and countries that he had visited in his voyages. Besides the eldest boy, they had now another child playing on the floor, and no one could tell which John liked best,—he could not tell himself : they were both Nancy's.

CHAPTER IX.

AWFUL TERMINATION OF THE CAREER OF MELDRUM.

THE employer to which Mrs. Tulloch had recommended Meldrum had his manufactory and warehouse in Fenchurch-street. He was one of those quiet, substantial, unassuming men, who go through life like a quiet, almost entirely hidden stream through the country, diffusing comforts and benefactions in the shape of employment—and not that alone. He was never seen in the foamy ridge of politics, yet he held, with a wise moderation of manner, the most thoroughly liberal and just opinions. He had come up from the country a poor lad, and had made his way to immense wealth. Though little known himself to the general political world, his money was well known to that particular class of politicians who may be termed *Shilling Philanthropists*,—men who, without a spark of talent, set up for political philanthropists, and, possessed themselves of great wealth, purchase a reputation by the expenditure of their loose change on political agitation—men who, if there be a public subscription to be entered into that will be well blazoned about in the newspapers, can come down with their £100; but who, if a political veteran, a political martyr, or a political organ, is to be aided and supported in a quiet, unostentatious way, are always found wanting;—plentiful in excuses, but having no cash to spare.

Mr. Martin Maxwell, as we may term him, was not one of this class. This class knew the way to his purse, and make free draughts upon it. For himself, he carried out practically the advancing doctrines of the times. He had rebuilt his premises in a healthy and airy style; he gave good wages, and practised early closing; he was for universal

suffrage, and universal education ; the equal diffusion of God's blessing amongst his children ; he had established a good library, with newspapers and periodicals, for the use of his people ; he had encouraged them to form a mutual improvement society amongst themselves ; and at Christmas gave them a dinner, and presided at it himself ; he had promoted the study of music and design amongst them ; and to any and as many of these advantages as he could grasp even the porter was admitted.

Meldrum, with fear and trembling, went for some time through his duties ; but by degrees, finding that he was not discovered or suspected by any one, that he passed to and fro in the streets with his knot on his shoulders or his arm, and went to wagon warehouses, and coach and railway offices, with full security, he gave up his alarms, and with fifteen shillings a week, and such a home as that of Nancy Tulloch's, if he could have forgotten the past, he felt that he might still have called himself fortunate.

But if he could have stilled the avenging demon in his own bosom, there was but little chance but that some outward circumstances might soon put an end to his present favourable position. And such an one soon fell out.

"Come, my old friend ! stand a glass, won't you ? for it's very cold," said a tall and showy damsel as he passed a gin-palace near Leadenhall Street.

Meldrum looked at the unhappy woman, and quickly endeavoured to draw his sleeve from her grasp, when, at the same moment, father and daughter recognized each other ! It was Dinah, painted, bedizened, and half tipsy, who, suddenly growing pale, rushed away, and left Meldrum withered as by a flash of lightning, and staggering under the horrible blow of that discovery, till he was obliged to lean against the wall for support. A throng of busy vagabonds were in a moment about him, asking what was the matter, and advising him to go in and get a dram to strengthen his old heart. The old man gathered together his confounded faculties and his prostrated strength, and went on as well as he could, without a reply.

To escribe such misery as now crushed the heart of James Meldrum is beyond the art or vigour of a mortal pen. The last stroke seemed given to his fate. His livid

and haggard looks startled all that he came near—the two women at home, Zealous Scattergood, who still came in once or twice a week to converse with him and his employer, and the people in the factory. Meldrum only complained of pain, but refused to give up his work, and did it. But from morning till night, and almost from night till morning, one thing only was running in his head, and that was, how he might seek out and save Dinah. Oh, if he had had that crime from off his conscience, how easy would it be, if Dinah were inclined to reform, to get her into the warehouse or factory of that good Samaritan who had employed him, and who rejoiced in nothing more than in rescuing the outcast of humanity. But then ! every attempt of this kind was a clue to his own detection and identity. To save his child he might lose himself: he paused between the rescue of his own flesh and blood, and the terror of the gallows.

In this dilemma he turned again to the good Nancy Tulloch. There was but one thing—if he could but see his daughter and prevail on her to assume his present name—but that he feared was hopeless : the name of Dinah Meldrum was too notorious in certain quarters, and to too many of the lowest grade of London characters. Could he prevail on her to ignore their relationship ? It was the sole hope : and catching at this, he sounded Mrs. Tulloch as to her willingness to assist in saving this poor girl, and found her as usual willing to do what she could. Happy herself, and seeming as if she had never known what vice or sorrow was, she was still ever eager to aid in saving the fallen.

Encouraged by this hope, Meldrum set about to trace out the haunts of Dinah, to track her thence home, and to strive with all his power to bring her back to the paths of virtue. The very idea seemed to diffuse a peace and a strength into his own mind. He went to his day's labour, with the purpose, at its close, of commencing his endeavours to this end. But to the path of return to the right, how many are the obstacles that present themselves !

Issuing from the warehouse-door during the day, with a large packing-case on his back, Meldrum saw a form flit past that sent a thrill of icy terror through him. He felt that he could not be mistaken in that figure—that step—that threadbare black dress glazed with grease and filth. He

was not long left in doubt : at the corner of the next street it once more passed him—it was he!—Brassington, and no other!

If a tiger, a lion, or the arch-fiend himself, had crossed his path, it would have excited less horror in him. In that man's recognition there was death and the gallows. Meldrum felt ready to drop under his load; yet he put forth all his strength, and did not pause, or attempt to rest even against the wall or a post. He laboured on, hardly knowing what he did, to the wagon office whither he was bound. When he had delivered his load, he came out expecting to encounter Brassington with police to secure him; but no, Brassington was not to be seen. Somewhat relieved by this, and trusting that he had escaped the recognition of this man, he returned to the warehouse, and completed his day; though everything seemed to spin round about him, and he felt, as it were, flames burning in every vein and limb.

As he quitted the warehouse in the evening, the very first object on which his eye fell was the man-spider Brassington, who, posted on the opposite side of the street, was evidently awaiting him. For a month, indeed, had he been traversing every street, alley, and quay, in the east of London, in pursuit of his victim. For a long time he had fixed his attention only on men in the sailor garb; but of late he had given up this in despair. He was persuaded that if Meldrum was in London he had again changed his dress; and accordingly he scrutinized every man that was about the same size. He followed the great thoroughfares, reading the face of every working man that he met. He turned down all courts and alleys, towards every quay or dock, and haunted the doors of shops and warehouses. At length he had found his man; and this time he resolved to be sure. With his usual avarice, however, he hesitated to call a policeman to seize him in the street, lest by any chance the man might put in an artful claim of his own, and outwit him of his fee, or at least share it to too great an extent. He determined, therefore, to dodge his victim to his lodging, and then laying the information before the magistrate, claim the necessary aid from him, and thus unquestionably secure the whole reward. Satisfied, therefore, with perceiving Meldrum come forth, he affected not to pay any particular attention to him,

but allowing him to proceed a certain distance, he then followed carefully, but with as quiet a manner as possible.

But there requires no great circumstance to alarm the vigilance of a guilty conscience : there requires much to escape it.

Meldrum perceived his enemy and his object, and resolved to encounter art with art. Instead, therefore, of going home, he took his course over London Bridge, on the centre of which he paused as if surveying the shipping. He saw Brassington cross over the road, and proceed over the bridge on the other side. He watched him to the end of the bridge, and so markedly that Brassington did not venture to pause, but, looking back once or twice to see that his prey was still there, went on. This accomplished, Meldrum made a rapid retreat, cowering as he went, to avoid the eye of Brassington, amid the throng, and suddenly darting down the steps which lead to the steam wharf, he flew along till he could plunge into a cross street, and here, perceiving nothing of his pursuer, as suddenly wheeled into a third, going in another direction. In a little while he was pacing along Crutchedfriars, down St. John-street, Man-street, and thence into Prescott-street, by Goodman's-fields. Before issuing from this street, he waited some time to see whether his enemy would appear, but he saw nothing of him. Fearing, however, to approach nearer to his lodgings till more assured, he turned once more, and, descending White Lion-street, he proceeded along Castle-street : here, however, he had not gone a hundred yards, when he perceived that he had done well not to go nearer to his home. The crafty and stealthy foe was still on his track. Roused to a spirit of resentment by the sight, he now resolved to give the fellow a good run, and turning up Cannon-street-road, he started on at his fleetest walking pace, brooding over desperate thoughts more deeply at every step. Reaching Whitechapel-road, he plunged into that wilderness of life lying between Bishopsgate-street, the Hackney-road, and Bethnal Green-road, and following first one and then another direction, continued his progress for some time. As the night had set in, and the object of Meldrum became obvious, Brassington, however, assumed a bolder aspect, had come up nearer to his prey, and kept an undisguised sharp look upon him, lest he

should disappear in some unlighted street or entry. Perceiving this, Meldrum again struck out right ahead down the Bethnal Green-road, crossed Bethnal Green, followed the length of Chester-place, went down Green-street, and, turning at right angles, issued out upon that waste piece of ground called Bonner's Field.

These fields have, since this memorable evening of Meldrum's life, undergone great changes. Then, the old house of Bloody Bonner—probably that in which he used to keep Protestant martyrs in his coal-hole, and brought them out daily to whip them himself—was standing, with three or four other tenements adjoining in their gardens. These have since been pulled down for improving the entrance to the New Victoria Park, and their place is only known by some few straggling trees, and traces where the foundations have been dug out.

Meldrum at first wound leisurely along the outskirts of this large, and then ill-lighted common. He lingered under the shadow of the trees near the new church, then strolled past Bonner's Hall, and, traversing the outskirts of the adjoining houses and gardens, hesitated whether he should cross the fields to Hackney Grove, and so cut into the country, and towards Lea Bridge, and thence to the forest. Fearing, however, that Brassington, seeing this design and not choosing to trust himself with him in the country, should take the opportunity to call some passing policeman to his aid, he abruptly proceeded across the field, and reaching another group of large trees close to a pool of water, he determined to make a stand here, and come to close quarters if possible with his persevering foe.

He looked round: the spot seemed exactly adapted to his purpose—it was at a good distance from Bonner's Hall. The rest of the field beyond was at the back of the great Bethnal Green Union. No one could come soon from that quarter—or were, indeed, likely to hear. All was gloomy, silent, and remote. Here, then, he suddenly disappeared behind the massy bole of an old elm tree, and rearing himself close to the trunk, he awaited the event.

It was exactly as he had calculated. Brassington, now becoming anxious, and losing sight of his object, dashed forward in alarm, and stood face to face with his intended prey.

"So you are here!" said Meldrum, gruffly addressing his enemy.

"And you!" replied Brassington.

Meldrum grasped the collar of Brassington, and giving him a fierce shake, felt the spirit of vengeance rising in his soul, and glanced a savage scowl on the thin old man.

"What *is* it you would have with me?" he exclaimed. "What *do* you dog me for in this manner? But as you *are* come thus far, you shall not come for nothing."

With that he gave the old man another terrible shake, and Brassington, terrified at the strength of the man into whose hands he had suffered his avarice to beguile him, now said hurriedly,—

"You won't hurt me! You won't kill me! Let me go, and I'll not say anything."

"Yes," said Meldrum, "I'll trust you: I should think I *may*, after what I've seen to-night—after what I saw the other day." And with that he seized the old man by the throat.

"Let me go, I say! Let me go!—and I'll give you—— I'll ——"

But here his voice was silenced by the grasp of Meldrum, whose passions were boiling, and heaven, earth, remorse, repentance, and the gallows, alike forgotten. The present, which decides the commission of crime, spite of judge, jury, or hangman,—the present, with all its violence of vengeance, was the only power that swayed the malefactor's soul.

A desperate struggle ensued. The old man, who had cried out with the cowardly feeling of the mean lurker for human blood, now perceiving that there was no hope from any appeal to his enemy, with the cunning of his character, plucked his case-knife from his pocket, and, as he was stifling in the iron grasp of his foe, began frantically to stab at him with all his might.

Meldrum, who received one or two wounds, now grew mad with rage, and, striking Brassington with his fist, felled him to the earth, and falling on him, flung it to a distance, and again grasping the throat of the prostrate man, did not release his hold till he had ceased to struggle. He then sprang up, cast a hasty glance around, and, catching the gleam of the water in the hollow just by, he dragged his vic-

tim down, and, plunging him in, hurried away and over the field at his highest speed.

"Another!" said the murderer, as he rushed wildly along. "Another murder, and that designedly. The devil is sure of me now—there is nothing but damnation for me. Oh, Zealous Scattergood!—Oh, Mrs. Tulloch, if you could know this! But the devil is stronger than you, and me, and all of us. He has me body and soul." Thus did this frantic malefactor rave to himself, as he sped on. He knew not rightly whither he was going. It was vain to think of returning to his lodgings or his employment. He made for a lodging-house that he knew of; and, concealing himself during the day, again issued forth at night, and sought the place of last night's tragedy. He wished to see whether the body still was there: he could see nothing. He entered the town again; and hiding first in one place, then in another, till he could hear something, he at length learned that Brassington was not dead, but that he had recovered, and was alive. The water was not deep: it had served to refresh him and recall life: he had not entirely ceased to breathe,—he recovered; and now a fresh hue and cry was abroad after Meldrum. He was now identified as the murderer of the old lady, and the attempter of this second murder.

Terrified at the certain prospect of the gallows, he now made a desperate push for life. There was an emigrant ship lying at the London Docks. He got aboard just before sailing, paid his passage, and was now descending the Thames. Wearied with his terrible transition of exasperated passions, and the agonies of a crime-haunted soul, and anxious not to be seen, he plunged into his berth, and lay for a day and a night.

He hoped when out at sea to be out of danger; but Providence had decreed otherwise. Blood cried from the ground against him, and the ocean refused to harbour him. Contrary winds prevented the vessel from getting off the coast; it continued tossing to and fro in the Downs, and the captain, unwilling to put into any port on account of the heavy dues, cast anchor; but they soon slipped cable and were off again. The following night it blew fiercely, and was intensely dark. By some mistake of the signals at midnight

they ran foul of another vessel, and there was every prospect of both going down together. The masts entangled together caused the vessels to work below, as if they would sink each other down into the sea. The masts were cut away, and the next day the two vessels were towed away by passing steamers.

Scarcely did the people appear on the deck of the vessel in which Meldrum was, when, amongst the crowd of emigrants, who should the flying malefactor see but, large and rosy, and well-fed as ever, his old acquaintance Big Bow-wow! He stood amid a numerous group of wife and children, who were all seeking the shores of America.

No sooner did Birkhampshire see Meldrum than, turning to the captain, he said, "There is the Jonah!"

There was an immediate commotion amongst the crew and passengers. Birkhampshire's story was eagerly listened to, and the captain ordered the men instantly to seize Meldrum, and secure him till they got back to London, whither the steamer was hauling them.

His doom was fixed. He saw that the hand of God was against him, and at once the gallows, the shouting, mocking crowds, and strangling cord, were before him. In the next instant he was in the sea! It was the impulse of the moment's terror of a public death and public shame—a single leap, and it was done. There was a cry—a rush to the boats—one had been crushed between the two ships, the other was let down in all haste; but the felon was gone, and not a trace of him could be discovered.

Thus terminated the strange career of James Meldrum. Who could have imagined such a beginning and such an ending? Who shall say what are the crimes that they give origin to when they drive peaceable men desperate, and close the avenues of life against them? What a wide distance between James Meldrum the Methodist class-leader, and Meldrum the murderer! There was no need that one should have become the other. Under a better system, the better nature of the man had been maintained. He was ground, crushed, outraged, and he became—what he was. The same process may be readily carried out in others. It becomes a wise government and a Christian nation, that a better system shall produce us better fruits.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

It may be imagined that the astonishment of the Tullochs and Zealous Scattergood was not small when they came to know the awful termination of the career of Meldrum. But how did they come to know? They read, indeed, in the newspapers of the death of Meldrum, the Berkshire murderer, by his jumping overboard at the moment of detection in the emigrant ship, but it passed from their minds, as such passages do, in the multitude of horrors with which modern life abounds; and there was no connexion in their thoughts between Meldrum the murderer and Jabez Baxter, who had suddenly disappeared from his employment and his lodgings.

This disappearance had been a matter of much speculation, wonder, and concern, at Nancy Tulloch's. Mrs. Brentnal professed not to wonder at all, but reminded Nancy that she had never liked the man, and had warned her that sooner or later she would repent of her too great easiness with strange people. Nancy Tulloch was twitted in a gentle way too by Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell for her introduction of this man to their notice. That he had gone off voluntarily they did not doubt, but they could not perceive from what cause, or that he had taken a farthing's worth of what did not belong to him: on the contrary, he had left the greater part of a week's wages behind, which Mr. Maxwell handed to Mrs. Tulloch towards the arrears of lodging.

Nancy Tulloch and good old Mr. Scattergood were deeply concerned at the event. They bore patiently any little cause of triumph against them, and were only grieved for the man himself. They did not believe but that some

sudden circumstance had caused him to go off; if, indeed, no accident had occurred to him. All this, however, might have remained a mystery, perhaps for ever, if Mr. Maxwell, without saying anything to any one, but to satisfy his own mind, and perhaps that of Mrs. Tulloch—for he had noticed her distress, and had ceased to rally her on her Quixotism—had not put an advertisement in the *Times*, offering £5 reward for the discovery of what had become of his porter, who had so unaccountably disappeared. This advertisement at once brought up old Brassington to the warehouse to claim the reward. He could at once identify Meldrum, the Berkshire murderer, and the porter of Mr. Maxwell, who now bore the name of Jabez Baxter. Great was the astonishment of Mr. Maxwell; not less that of Mrs. Tulloch and Zealous Scattergood. They felt almost horrified at having been in so close and continued an intercourse with a murderer. Mrs. Brentnal had got a proverb for life—“Nancy! Nancy! didnt I say be careful? Mercy on us! if he had killed the children, you, me, and all of us, before he went off!”

The remaining history of the Meldrum family may be told in a few words. Zealous Scattergood was, during the following summer, sent for to pray by a dying woman in a London hospital. It was Dinah Meldrum. The course of her wretched life was about to close in that misery and amid those appalling horrors which vice and gin so plentifully produce. The poor girl, like her father, had once wandered into Zealous’s chapel, and the memory of what she then heard made her implore his presence by her dying bed. From her Mr. Scattergood learned that her brothers were both transported—Job for embezzling his master’s money, and Sampson for a robbery at Newmarket. Such is the history of the Meldrum family!

We had dropped the pen, when some one cried,—“But we have not said good-bye to the Tullochs, and to good old Zealous Scattergood.” Say it, then.

John Tulloch has returned from his voyage, and has announced that it is his last. He has arranged to go into partnership with his brother in Rotherhithe. John has saved a good round sum of money. He has already taken a house

on that side of the water, in which not only Mrs. Brentnal, but Zealous Scattergood, is to have a room. He has already taken the whole family, children and all, to see this house ; not by the Thames Tunnel, be sure, good reader, for John hates all such underground, new-fangled "mowdiwarp burrows," (mole burrows) ; and, so long as he lives, will sail over the sunshiny surface of the flood in a natural and rational boat.

John Tulloch expected everybody to be charmed with his house ; but at first they were all a good deal disappointed, for it faced into a low, and crowded, and dirty street. But when they entered it, they found themselves proceeding along a long passage, and presently came to a large room with a large window, with a painted blind drawn down. This blind, John, with a significant smile, drew up, and exclaimed,—“There, then ! What do you think of that, mates ?” The effect was testified by a general exclamation of delight—for it gave a view out upon the broad river, all alive with innumerable craft of various kinds—large ships lying in forests near at hand, steamers careering along with crowds of people in the middle of the watery way, and beyond, the vast mass of London, with its warehouses, churches, and public buildings, up and down the river.

The sun was shining brightly on all ; and John Tulloch, assured by the pleasure evidenced on every face, said, “Well now, this is our common sitting-room ; and now I’ll show you where we are each and all of us to stow ourselves away.” And with that he went and pointed out a snug room where Zealous and his books might be, and another for Mrs. Brentnal.

In the elation of his heart, Uncle John expatiated on the plans he had laid down. Zealous was to go and preach still to his old congregation, and they would go with him. He was to teach the children here in the house ; and every now and then they would make a holiday, by going down to Greenwich, and having a day of it. Would not the children roll down the hills in the park ! Would not they have some fine cracks with the old sailors ! And would not they have some famous tea-drinkings !

And there they are ; and should any of my readers, on one

of their holiday excursions to that popular spot, behold a jolly, happy-looking sailor, with his pretty little merry wife, each with a child by the hand, and a thin and grave old Dissenting minister, having on his arm a stout old country dame that does not like going up hill, they need not send for me to ask who they may be—they will know at once—certainly!—and will wish, as they pass them with a smile,—Long life to Uncle John and all his family !

SIR PETER AND HIS PIGEON.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPIRIT OF HATRED.

IN the woods of Wintanrik there is a summer-house, which catches the eye of the traveller at a great distance on the plains below it: its white walls showing themselves amid the dark masses of those lofty woods, and its gilded vane flashing occasionally as it turns in the sunny air, lead the stranger to look for the mansion, which he naturally supposes must stand somewhere near it. There is no mansion. The estate of Wintanrik some years ago belonged to Sir Peter Bethell, who resided on his patrimonial property of Much-Hatten, some three miles off. This estate came into the Bethell family only with Sir Peter's mother, a Miss Little-hales, to whom it had descended from a long line of ancestry. It was singular that a property like Wintanrik, which, with its woods and farms, produced a rental of two thousand a year, should seem never to have possessed any family mansion that was worthy of being called one. But the truth was, that the estate, till the great war time, which gave so wonderful a stimulus to landed property, never had been looked on as a very valuable or desirable one. It consisted in a great measure of marshy moorlands, which, till the system of drainage was introduced, in consequence of the amazingly increased value of all agricultural produce, had lain in large rushy grazing farms, over which a few cattle, and numerous flocks of pewits, had ranged, to the small profit of the farmer, and still less of the landlord. The

Littlehales had always had sufficient acquaintance with the marshy nature of their lands, having there zealously pursued the snipes which abounded in them, and the trout and wild-ducks, which were amazingly plentiful in and about the river Clarshet, or Clearsheets, which flowed on in a broad stream over the purest gravel, gleaming brightly between wildernesses of rush and sedge, so as evidently to have suggested its own name. Their punt might be seen bearing them up or down this stream, or moored in some willowy creek, as they roamed and splashed over the vast flats after their game; but no idea of drainage, or of improved rental, seems to have crossed their brain till the period just spoken of, when the signs of improvement all around roused the father of the last Miss Littlehales to think of drains and embankments, which at once raised his heritage to the value mentioned. Possibly, had there been a male heir to Wintanrik, there would soon have sprung up a residence on the estate of corresponding dignity; but the heiress marrying the possessor of Much-Hatten, the house, such as it was, which her fore-fathers had inhabited, was, on the contrary, for a time deserted. This house stood in the village of Wintanrik, at the back of the woods, and on the edge of that great plain which formerly was a widely known marsh, but was now an expanse of well-cultivated farms. It was a bald, square, old brick house, with no marks of beauty whatever about it. At the time we speak of it was become a farm-house. A coach-road ran through the plain flat village; and those who travelled this road saw the old house of the Littlehales at some hundred yards from the road, having many of its upper windows bricked up on account of the window-tax, a great straw-yard adjoining it, and numbers of clean wooden pails and bright tin and brass pans reared near the house, speaking of dairy business on no inconsiderable scale.

Sir Peter Bethell, though he lived at the old family mansion of Much-Hatten, or Hatten Manor as it was more frequently called, frequently rode over to Wintanrik to look at his woods; but in the village he was very rarely to be seen. There was little to attract him thither, for his rents were duly paid; and there was something which was particularly calculated to keep him away: this was the widow of his second brother, Chute Bethell, who lived there with her two



Mrs Chute Bethell.



boys. There had been bitter dissensions in the Bethell family, and they had arisen out of this very estate of Wintanrik. The father of Miss Littlehales, on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, had taken care to have the estate settled on her and her heirs, but in such a loose way as was certain to originate disputes and ill-blood: these arose amongst her own children. Peter, the eldest son, succeeded by primogeniture to all the property not otherwise devised, and to the baronetcy as a matter of course, it being attached to the estate of Much-Hatten. But, on the birth of a second son, Lady Bethell had besought of her husband, Sir Paul, that Wintanrik should be bequeathed to this second son, Chute. So the matter was decided, and Chute grew up with the fixed expectation of Wintanrik as his heritage. Lady Bethell had died when Chute was quite a boy, and soon after the birth of a third son, who was named Elliott; she died in the firm persuasion that Chute would one day succeed to her ancestral estate of Wintanrik. But Chute, like many a young man before him, had the misfortune to fall under his father's heaviest displeasure,—and that by marriage. He had led the life of a young country gentleman, looking forward to the possession of Wintanrik one day, and in the meantime indulging his love of farming, by singularly enough taking on lease from his father one of the farms of that estate, and there shooting, coursing, and fishing to his heart's content. But at the principal inn of the county town, which Chute regularly frequented, and of which the landlord was a keen sportsman and a knowing farmer, Chute fell in love with the daughter, and, to Sir Paul's astonishment and exasperation, married her. She was a fine, high-spirited woman, not wanting in sense or education, and would have pleased the old man well enough had she been a person of family. As it was, he forthwith struck Chute out of his will; and neither reason nor entreaty could ever afterwards prevail on him to see him, or restore him to favour.

Chute thought, indeed, that, on the part of his elder brother Peter, there was no entreaty used in his behalf; on the contrary, he was persuaded that Peter was very well pleased with the chance which threw Wintanrik into his hands. Chute called upon Peter to act like a brother, and see that his mother's wishes regarding him were carried out: he

enjoined him to do this as he hoped for God's blessing ; and Peter, declared that he would do it if possible : but it never was done. Peter at that time was a gay young man, living much in London, and at the houses of various great families in different parts of the kingdom, the sons of which were his intimate friends, and where, as the heir of a wealthy baronetcy, he was always a welcome guest. Chute meanwhile continued on his farm, growing every year more embittered against his brother Peter, whom he had come to regard as secretly resolved to hold fast his rightful patrimony, and as really keeping Sir Paul so steadfast in his alienation from him. High words took place between them when they met ; Chute went so far as to declare to Peter, that if he did not prevail on his father to do justice to him, or did not himself yield up Wintanrik to him on succeeding to it, he would kill him, if he were hanged for it the next hour. Chute's wife, whose pride was deeply wounded, strengthened him in his resentment, and in his violent conduct to his brother. So far did this go, that when at length an opportunity occurred in which a prudent man would have most probably succeeded in securing his object, Chute, by his blind resentment, only drove it more completely out of his power.

Peter had, in his turn, incurred his father's resentment. He had in his gay life, and amid companions who were some of them deeply engaged in sporting matters, contracted heavy debts, and given security by post-obits, which, coming to the knowledge of the careful old Sir Paul, had greatly exasperated him : he had refused Peter any help or countenance in a great emergency of this kind, which obliged Peter to flee abroad. With the pecuniary difficulty was involved a love affair, which added wonderfully to its embarrassment. Peter's rival in the affections of the lady on whom he had set all his hopes was at the bottom of the severity with which the debt was pressed, and which drove him to the continent. Peter's absence threatened to prove fatal to his success with the object of his attachment ; and in this difficulty he humbled himself so far as to apply to Chute, entreating him to raise the necessary sum for him on his lease, and promising to use every endeavour with their father for the cession of his claims. But such was the blind resentment of Chute, and his joy in the enmity between Peter and

their father, that he sent Peter word, that, so far from helping him with a penny, he would gladly give a thousand pounds to see him transported for life. Chute had no doubt that now his father must soon relent towards himself, and that he should reap the advantage of Peter's absence and disfavour.

But at this very crisis old Sir Paul was found dead in his after-dinner chair. Peter, now Sir Peter, hastened over to his estate, discharged the debt against him, and remembered with a peculiar clearness the good wishes and conduct of his brother. There was no time for Chute to show whether he was disposed to fulfil his deadly vow towards Sir Peter, for, by a singular fatality, he himself died suddenly—it was said of an inward chagrin—three weeks after his father. The widow of Chute, showing the same high spirit, and breathing the same inveterate animosity against Sir Peter, remained on the spot. The lease secured her yet a long term, and she seemed resolved to maintain herself on the spot, and to beard Sir Peter on his own land with the most dogged obstinacy. Sir Peter, through his solicitor, made her the most liberal offers, if she would retire to some distant place. She flung back the proposal with scorn. No! there would she stand to the last possible moment, as a crying evidence of his wrong and robbery to his brother's orphans. She everywhere designated him Sir Peter the Robber: she waited, she said, to see the judgment of God upon him: she took a pew in the church of Much-Hatten, and there she went duly, Sunday by Sunday, with her boys, that Sir Peter and all his household, and the villagers, might see the widowed sister and the orphans that he had wronged.

Sir Peter Bethell was himself far from a happy man; he had succeeded to a noble estate, but he had lost the woman on whom he had fixed intensely his affections. During his absence his rival had succeeded in obtaining her; and this, and some other things which had fallen out between himself and those in whom he had placed his most cordial youthful confidence, seemed to have cast a blight and a mildew upon his nature. He was no longer the same being. Instead of a gay enjoyer of life, he was a moody and secluded man. From the moment that he returned to Hatten Manor he

sought no society, and returned no advances towards it. From the moment that the widow Bethell, as she was called, made her appearance at Hatten Church, he disappeared from the family pew. Mrs. Chute Bethell pronounced him a godless unbeliever; and though he was not present to see it, every Sunday she duly presented her stately person at the church, and led her two boys by the hand with an air which said plainly—"See the poor innocents, that this bad man has defrauded!"

Years went on. Sir Peter continued a solitary man : looking after his estate ; keeping every thing in the nicest order ; spoken well of by his tenants and the poor of the village, but by all else regarded as a misanthrope who had a load on his conscience, and who sneered at human nature and at virtue. Meantime the widow Bethell had maintained her firm stand at Wintanrik, though she had relaxed her visits to Hatten Church, where Sir Peter never appeared, and had sent her two boys, Walter and Francis, to a public school at a distance. These boys had now reached the ages of fifteen and seventeen. They had been brought up by their mother in all the belief of wrong, and the spirit of hatred towards their uncle, which animated her own bosom. They had been taught to look upon the estate of Wintanrik as truly and rightfully their own ; and they were, moreover, taught to regard that of Much-Hatten as likely, by the course of events, to become Walter's. She had made Walter vow most solemnly on the Bible, and by all his hopes of heaven, if ever that were the case, not to act as their uncle had acted towards their father, but to give over Wintanrik to Francis. She had declared to Walter many a time, and in a tone that made the two young hearts tremble, that if he failed in this—if he, too, proved a perjured robber of his brother—she would curse him while she lived, and haunt him after death.

It was no wonder that, brought up under such circumstances, and in the spirit of such sentiments, the two boys came to regard both Wintanrik and Much-Hatten with very peculiar feelings, and to look forward to a future day in which they should be masters of all these rich lands now withheld from them. In their eyes their uncle was a mon-

ster of injustice, and in their conversation with each other they echoed all their mother's feelings and ideas. They often ranged all through the woods of Wintanrik, and fished in its river, and resolved if they saw Sir Peter to tell him plainly what they thought of him.

It was now Midsummer. They were come home for the holidays; and Walter was to return to school no more, but to take the management of the farm. One fine afternoon they had entered the woods, and strolled on to the summer-house of which we have spoken. They thought they would ascend to its balcony, and take a view over the country, including the dark woods in the distant valley which threaded the mansion of their strange and gloomy uncle, Sir Peter. The doors were seldom fastened, and they were often accustomed to range through the place. But now having entered, they found the door of the second story locked. Without passing through that they could not reach the top.

"That old curmudgeon, now, must have been here and done that," said Walter.

"Hang the unsociable dog-in-the-manger," said Francis. "No doubt he thinks that he deprives people of some pleasure in going out on the balcony. It would serve the gloomy old ascetic right to knock the door in now."

"Let us do it," said Walter: and at once they kicked the door, and pushed against it with their shoulders. But it was too strong. There was a strange echo in the old empty place, and Francis said, "What is that!"—for amid the noise which they had made, there seemed to be a sound as of a ghostly voice. They listened, but all was silent. As if *something*, however, had struck them with a slight fear, the two youths, as by a simultaneous impulse, left the door, and descended to the room below. Here they were soon whistling and laughing, and presently talking in a high strain.

"What a wretched old curmudgeon that uncle of ours is," said Walter. "What *is* the use of such people in the world?"

"To plague honest people," replied Francis; "who would only be too happy if it were not for such porcupines."

"Yes! bless me, Frank," said Walter; "if we had but all this property now, as we ought to have,—for it is ours, not that old swindler's—would not we do rather different, eh?"

"Yes! I should think so," said Francis. "What would you do, Wat, if you had it? You would put a bit of life into the country round, I think, would not you?"

"My gracious! but I think I should. I'll tell you, Frank, what I would do. I would be a soldier. I would never rest till I was a general; and then I would do such feats that I would soon have an army at my command, and would get a name like Marlborough. That's what I would do. I could put down all the foes of old England. Bethell of Wintanrik! that *should* be a name, Frank, I can tell you."

"Oh!" said Francis; "that is extravagant. That is not so soon done, Wat; but I can tell you what I would do. I would settle down here. I would have nobody's blood on my head. No! you might have your bloody laurels, I would have palms of peace."

"Bloody laurels! Palms of peace!" said Walter, laughing. "Why, Frank, you are going to turn poet—you are quite romantic! But what would you do to win your palms?—not merely collect your rents, I suppose?"

"Oh, no!" said Francis. "Collect my rents I would, but they should be easy rents. No farmer should curse me as he ploughed with a heavy heart. I would make all the poor and the aged happy. There should be no workhouse in Wintanrik or Much-Hatten. Every old creature should sit by his or her fire in comfort; and as for the children I would build a school for them, and make them all virtuous and enlightened. In short, Wat, all round here should be a paradise,—it should in reality. What a strange stupid thing it is that people wont do all that kind of thing, instead of plaguing one another as they do."

"Well, it is very odd they don't," said Walter, laughing. "But do you think, Frank, you really should do all that? Why, you would be another Man of Ross."

"Wouldnt I?" asked Francis. "I wish I might be tried, and then you should see. I should not envy you all your martial fame, Wat, if you were ever so great a conqueror—not I, indeed."

While Francis was saying these last words, the two boys were descending the steps from the summer-house into the

wood. They were still in eager talk, but the listener could catch no more of its meaning. The listener! yes, Sir Peter Bethell himself was a listener to all this; and he it was who had bolted the door of the upper room. He had seen his two nephews approaching as he was accidentally there, and as he could not close the door without being seen, he had hastened up the stairs and bolted the upper room door behind him. As the two youths went away through the wood Sir Peter looked cautiously from the window, and with a dark and sarcastic smile said:—"So—so—my young heroes! that is what you would do, is it? That is the way you talk of your uncle, eh? That is the way your amiable mother teaches you to talk of me? And you would do so differently. You! You would not be like the old curmudgeon, the old unsociable dog-in-the-manger, the old porcupine, Sir Peter. No! you would be saints and heroes! Oh! that eternal cant of this deceitful race,—this humbug of mortal hypocrisy,—this tinsel humanity with which all the world dresses its amiable laws, and daubs over its devilry! Sweet young enthusiasts! What now if I were to try you! if I were to quit this Wintanrik, which is not mine, oh no! which is yours of course—if I were to let you become a hero—and a saint? Ha! ha! It were almost worth while to try it. One knows the upshot well enough; but yet—why it would be a game, an experiment, a grand pursuit for a life."

Sir Peter descended, and issued from the summer-house. There was a wild strange light in his otherwise gloomy eyes: there was a strange bitter smile on his thin features, as he went silently through the wood, and he ever and anon said, as to himself,—"What, and if I should! If the old curmudgeon should do them a generous deed? if the old porcupine should shed them a golden quill? It would"—but the sentence was never finished, at least in audible words.

Within a week Sir Peter surprised the widow Bethell with a visit. The stony-hearted woman was startled, but she ordered him to be admitted. As he entered her room she stood up, tall and proud. She was in the strength and even flower of her years. She was no longer the young

woman but the matron, large, full of vigour, and majestic, with a countenance which would have been comely had its expression not been so stern and defiant. Sir Peter, a tall slender man, whose hair was already thin and grey, and in whose meagre person and face there was a quiet even approaching to timidity, bowed to Mrs. Bethell, and seated himself in a chair which the haughty woman pointed to with her hand.

" You will be surprised, madam, at a visit from me ;" said Sir Peter.

" I do not deny it," replied the widow, still standing. " Pray, what may be its import ?"

" You accuse me, madam," replied the Baronet, " of injustice to your family."

" I have done that these dozen years ;" replied Mrs. Bethell. " All the world knows it—I have made no secret of it—yet that never brought you here before."

" And was it to be expected ?" asked Sir Peter, in the most unmoved and unimpassioned manner. " Your late husband, I think, made no secret of his feelings and intentions towards me, either."

" Quite true," said the widow.

" I think when he could have helped me, and won my eternal gratitude."

" Gratitude !—pshah !—do not let us hear any of that wretched cant !" said Mrs. Bethell, her eyes flashing with anger. " Is there any real matter of business, Sir Peter Bethell, that you have to address to me ?"

" There is," continued the Baronet, composedly. " Chute wished he could transport me; he menaced even worse. These are not things to draw brothers together. You, madam, or the world does you injustice, participated in those feelings : you have engrafted them in your children. Those, I think, are not facts likely to draw me hither ?"

" Nor that you kept back the property of my husband and his children," added the widow, indignantly.

" It never was his or theirs," said the Baronet. " Wintanrik was left me by my father. Here is the will,—you can see it."

" The will !—the trick of Satan ! Tell me not of wills,

Sir Peter," exclaimed the widow, vehemently. "Tell me of right, of justice, of your mother's living will,—yes! her will, Sir Peter, her will, and dying prayer. Tell me of these, and of God's truth. But why, I ask again, come you here to insult me?"

" You say I have wronged you," continued Sir Peter, outwardly unmoved as a stone. " Very well—there shall be no more of that. Your sons shall possess Wintanrik, at least when they are of age. I tell you, madam, that it is mine—mine by all laws human and divine—mine by my father's will, and by the enmity and murderous vows of your husband: but I resign it. If there be any injustice done to you or yours, it shall not be by me."

Sir Peter rose, threw a large sealed packet on the table, bowed, and withdrew. The astonished widow tore it open, and found it to contain a carefully and legally drawn deed of gift of the estate of Wintanrik to her sons Walter and Francis. It was to take effect on the day of Walter's majority, and from that time till the majority of Francis he was to act as his steward, and pay over that day his moiety of the proceeds duly and promptly to him. Till the majority of Walter, about three years, the brothers were to receive the annual sum of one thousand pounds, for the purposes of their befitting maintenance and education.

The astonishment of Mrs. Chute Bethell may be imagined on this disclosure. She had not patience to wait for the return of her sons, who were out fishing in the Clarshet, nor to send for them. She hastily threw on her bonnet and shawl, and, followed by several greyhounds, the tall, haughty-looking woman might be seen walking at a rapid rate across the great grass meadows which led to the river. The two young men, who were in their punt, saw her coming at a great distance, and imagining that something extraordinary must have occurred to bring her thither at such a rapid pace, they stood up in the boat and gazed towards her in wondering enquiry. Mrs. Bethell saw that they were looking, and gave a rapid wave of her white handkerchief, which soon brought them to land and into a rapid walk towards her. Her hot and flushed aspect, as they drew near, and the large document in her hand, convinced them

that something uncommon had occurred, but could give them no conception of that reality which burst upon them as they read the deed which the exulting mother put into their hands.

"There is a God, yet!" said Mrs. Bethell, in great excitement. "Conscience has been too much for Sir Peter. He could not shut out that—it has followed him into his great lonely hall, into his closet, into his bed. It has wrung the cup of oil from him."

"But it is wonderful! most wonderful!" said the youths. "Sir Peter cannot be so bad as we have thought him. This is good—it is generous!"

"Good! generous!" said their mother. "Good, to disgorge what was too torturing to retain?—Generous, to restore but a part of what was not his own? See! he gives it up only these three years hence—and till then only a half of its income."

But the youths did not sympathise with the mother's unsatisfied feeling. They did not trouble themselves for what was withheld—they were only too bewilderingly rapturous over what was so unexpectedly gained. The three returned homeward in eager and joyful discussion of the strange event. A world of new views, feelings, prospects, and speculations came pouring in upon them. They were at once wealthy—they would be more so: they would be one day—they felt quite assured of that now—in possession of all the domains and the honours of the family.

A new turn was at once given to their plans of life. Instead of Walter remaining at home, both of the brothers were to go at once to the University. They were to be educated in a style befitting the future heads of the Bethell family. They purchased splendid horses for themselves, engaged a man-servant to attend them, laid in a stock of the most fashionable clothes, and of every thing becoming young gentlemen of their expectations; and on the commencement of the November term betook themselves to Oxford.

The widow Bethell remained in her old farm-house at Wintanrik. She remained to manage the farm, but she assumed a state in accordance with the brightening fortunes

of herself and sons. She now had her handsome close carriage, though drawn only by one horse; but it was driven by a man in the Bethell livery, and she looked on the lands and woods of Wintanrik with all the pride of the lady of the domain. Sir Peter had again withdrawn to his secluded life: he never came across the widow's path,—but he was not asleep. He had now a great object in life: he had lost an estate, but he had gained in that loss an interest—an engagement which had a wonderful attraction for him. He watched and—waited.

CHAPTER II.

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

WE will now take our stand ten years later down the stream of time than the event which closed our last chapter. Sir Peter had watched the development of that splendid career which was to follow the possession of Wintanrik in the lives of his two nephews. Sir Peter had a profound belief in the vanity of human wishes, and the still greater vanity of human possessions. He had studied men in the records of the past, and had felt in his own case the seal of history again stamped unmistakeably on the race. He remembered the soaring dreams of the two boys in the summer-house,—they were burned as with a hot iron into his brain by the strictures on himself with which they had been accompanied. Had he not himself had such day-dreams? Had he not vowed that when property and power became his, they should for once be disenthralled from selfishness and meanness? Have not all men such golden moments in youth—such soarings into the ideal world of beauty and virtue? And has one man ever realized them? Do not the old powers still enslave us? Does not the old clay still weigh down the advancing soul?

Such were Sir Peter's secret thoughts; and he would have been grievously disappointed had the result been better than he expected: he would have felt it as a condemnation of himself. But Sir Peter was not doomed to such mortification. Ten years had gone on, and where were the "martial laurels and the palms of peace?" Where was the great and patriotic general? where the Howard of Wintanrik? There was no such noble hero. There was no school in Wintanrik,—no old people sitting in Arcadian comfort by their own fire-sides; but the workhouse still stood and received its regular supply of age and misery.

Sir Peter chuckled secretly to himself, and had a species of happiness in the errors and follies of those kinsmen who

had freely censured him. When he looked towards Wintanrik it seemed as if the scenes of his own life had been acted over again. There had been another wave in the ocean of time, and it was a precise facsimile of the one that went before it. There were two brothers at deadly strife about the very property which was to have made them magnificent benefactors to their country and their fellow-men. There was one brother in power and possession, and another cursing him as a robber and oppressor.

Walter, the eldest son of the widow Bethell, had shown himself of a gay and open-hearted disposition. He had even entered the army as if contemplating the career he had promised to pursue : but there the matter ended. Even while at college, he had far outrun his share of the income allowed by Sir Peter. He had been even there compelled to borrow from the careful Francis. Francis was careful to an extraordinary degree. He lent Walter all he wanted ; he even mortgaged his share of the estate of Wintanrik to supply Walter with the means of purchasing his commission in a cavalry regiment. But on this ground he assumed, on Walter's coming of age, the stewardship of the Wintanrik estate which then came to them. Francis found the cares of this stewardship quite enough for his young shoulders. He built no school—he took no measures to secure a comfortable continuance of the aged villagers at their own firesides. How could he do that, and manage this property with a strict regard to the interests of Walter as well as of his own ? For his own,—for himself,—if he had been free and unfettered, he would have made sacrifices, he would have done all that his youthful fancy proposed. But now, he had Walter's interests to look to : he stood in a position of nice responsibility—he had a duty of solemn religious justice to perform. Walter took no care of his own interests : he lived in London, or with his regiment, and sent continually demands for money which were never refused. Walter never asked for any balance-sheet, any settlement : he confided in the careful attention of Francis to the estate and the accounts. What a delicate situation for Francis ! But Francis kept the most masterly books. He was careful precisely as Walter showed a want of care. There was not a penny which he did not put down, and whenever his

accounts should be called for, they would be found most admirable and accurate.

That time came. At the end of the ninth year Walter had occasion for a large sum : he sent desiring Francis to remit it, and received an answer from Francis that he was sorry that he could not oblige his brother, but really there was nothing in hand. Walter wrote a hasty and even furious letter, demanding what Francis meant, and Francis in reply sent him up a vast mass of accounts accompanied by a most masterly balance-sheet, verified by an eminent accountant, showing simply that Walter had overdrawn his share of the proceeds during those nine years to something more than his whole share of the estate.

Walter stood confounded and almost senseless at the revelation of that awful fact. Such a suspicion had never for a moment stolen across his brain. He had no idea that he was overdrawing his share. Francis never hinted any such thing ; he never breathed a remonstrance. Why had he not remonstrated ? Why had he not warned him ? But Francis again asked, whether that was his business. Whether it was not quite natural for him to suppose Walter understood his own affairs ? Whether it was not sufficient and more than sufficient that he had taken all the care of the property, and never let Walter feel a want or an inconvenience ? There were, he added again, the accounts. Let them be examined by the best accountants—he wished it to be done in justification of himself; and if there were an error, he would be most happy to correct it. Walter accordingly put the papers into the hands of a lawyer, who put them into those of an eminent accountant, but not a flaw could be found in them. There were moneys advanced during the three years at Oxford; there was money advanced for the purchase of a commission ; there were advances, and large ones, beyond the share of income, through nine years, and there was interest on all the sums furnished in advance, and all those exceeding the balance of annual rent due ; which balance, owing to the accumulation of debt against Walter, had for some years been very small indeed. The upshot was that Francis's accounts were pronounced scrupulously correct, and that Walter was a ruined man !

But Walter did not agree to that view of the case. He

regarded himself as infamously swindled by Francis, and Francis felt himself grossly injured by those imputations on his honour. The feud between the brothers was terrible. Walter raged fearfully, and declared that even if the accounts of Francis were correct on the surface, the estate was of more value in the market than was represented by the rental, and insisted on the whole being sold that he might receive his just share. Francis, with a meekness and air of justice which told wonderfully in his favour, offered to have the estate valued, and pay over to Walter any balance in his favour. But this Walter only regarded as another deep scheme of Francis to wrest him out of the estate and keep it for himself. He could bear the idea of the estate going into the hands of strangers, but not of its becoming solely and wholly Francis's. That, he believed, was what Francis had been aiming at and scheming for all those years,—and perhaps he was not far wrong.

So there the matter stood. Every day only added to the growing heat and enmity between the two brothers. Their hatred towards each other grew to something terrible. Walter did not even hesitate to vow vengeance against the cool and cautious Francis, as Chute had formerly done against Sir Peter. This was a climax which gave a bias to the otherwise impartial interest with which Sir Peter had watched the progress of this fearful fraternal division. He now felt these cases of Francis and himself identified. He began to sympathise with Francis,—that is, in his own manner, and to conceive a violent repugnance to Walter. Meantime Mrs. Bethell, the mother of the contending brothers, having in vain striven to reconcile them, and by her own warmth of temper only the more embroiled them, fled from the scene; and uniting her small income with that of another now widowed sister, they took up their abode in the distant west of England. Francis Bethell was left alone in possession of Wintanrik.

During the years through which these affairs had been silently progressing towards this unhappy condition, there had been gradually developing itself in Sir Peter Bethell's life an element of peace and love. A little light sprung up, which had grown and grown till it had diffused itself through his otherwise gloomy mansion, though it could not brighten

the world without to his vision. His brother Elliott, a captain in the army, had fallen early in his career, leaving a wife and infant daughter. His wife had soon followed him, and had sent to Sir Peter as her dying present the little orphan girl. Sir Peter was taken by surprise at this bequest, and would probably have consigned the infant to a distant nurse, on a small allowance, if the child's nurse, who loved it as her own, had not made the journey to Hatten Manor with the dying woman's letter in her pockèt, and the child in her arms. She suddenly appeared thus equipped before Sir Peter; and instead of to a distant abode, she and the child were only consigned to a distant part of the house.

For a long time Sir Peter saw nothing of the infant, and enquired nothing after it. It was tended and cared for by its fond nurse, who avoided Sir Peter from fear, and was contented that her little charge was well, and was fast winning the affections of the whole household except its master. But ever and anon Sir Peter was passing the child and its nurse in his walks about his grounds. For a time he appeared to take no notice of it, but at length began to cast a grave glance at it as he passed, and as the nurse made her curtsey, to the poor woman's surprise and great joy, the Baronet one day stopped, patted the little girl's cheek, and asked its name. He did not even know its name! But from that time Sir Peter never passed it without some notice. He smiled, and the little creature smiled again, and stretched out its arms to him. The heart of Sir Peter was won from that hour, and a new and unknown feeling came into it. He began to ruminate in his walks and rides on the early days when its father, Elliot, and the impetuous Chute were boys with him. Their youthful sports together, their rambles in the woods, their boatings and their shootings, were before him like a strange dream, and the warmth which was thus awakened in his soul all gathered round the little Herminia, and she became the one thing in life that was precious to him. Very soon the little Minnie, or Minna, as she was called, might be found tumbling on the floor of Sir Peter's library for hours, while he sat solitary at his desk or over his book. As she grew and became a lively chattering little creature, he took her by the hand in his rambles through his woods and fields, carrying her in his arms and on his

back when she was tired. Sir Peter knew every bird and other creature that haunted his estate—every flower and insect which gave a summer charm to it; for while his heart had been turned from his fellow man, his eye at least had been daily conversant with nature, and he came to feel in himself a deep interest in all her features and her living things, for in them he thought there was no deceit.

He was now a daily wanderer amongst these, and the little Minna was his daily companion. He gathered flowers for her; he taught her to listen to and distinguish the notes of birds; he made her conscious of the pleasant solitude of the woods; and when she fell asleep amid all her bright chatter and quick inquiries, he would sit down and watch by her, spreading his handkerchief over her face, or driving the flies away from her little honied lips with a branch of some soft and fragrant shrub. As Minna grew into a little lively girl, full of sense, spirit, and vivacity, she might be seen skipping along the dim wood like a white butterfly, before his tall and dark figure. At other times she was seated before him on his horse on a soft little cushion; and as she grew older, there was a pony trotting alongside of Sir Peter's horse, and Minna was upon it talking and laughing joyfully, or listening with grave face and bright thoughtful eyes to what he was relating. In short, wherever Sir Peter Bethell was seen, there was seen Minna too; they were inseparable, and the people began to name them—Sir Peter and his Pigeon.

As Minna grew into girlhood it was necessary that she should be educated; but Sir Peter would not allow her to be separated from him on that account. He procured her an accomplished governess, and the best masters from the neighbouring towns were engaged to give her every possible instruction. All this went on in a distinct part of the house. Sir Peter rarely saw any of these ministers of knowledge, or they him; but he carefully noted Minna's progress, and, though invisible, stimulated and secured the necessary duties. Every day, during the hours when Minna was freed from her school labours, she spent with her uncle; and in the fine mornings and evenings they might be seen on horse-back riding up the pleasant valley of Much-Hatten, beneath the steep uplands on which showed themselves the woods and

vine-covered summer-house of Wintanrik. Years passed on thus: Minna was a young woman of eighteen. She was of a small but exquisite figure. Her hair was the richest chesnut brown, and her countenance was as fresh as the rose, delicate in its features as the lily, and full of vivacity and intelligence. Her step, and her whole frame, were light and buoyant as those of a fawn; and on horseback she displayed an ease and grace that were perfect. No objects were so familiar to the people all round that neighbourhood as Sir Peter and his Pigeon. Wherever rode or walked Sir Peter, there was Minna by his side, sweet and smiling as the early morning sky, and seeming to diffuse a pleasant serenity even over the grave aspect of the shy and secluded Sir Peter. At home Minna was a perpetual light and life in the house. She sung to her uncle and read to him, and through the ample rooms and galleries of that old mansion lent a charm which seemed to make every one forget that it was really solitary. Sir Peter's existence was wholly wrapped up in Minna, who was to him not a niece but the most precious of daughters: and for Minna herself, who knew nothing and had seen nothing of the world except in books, her whole being was concentrated in that isolated life, and in attachment to her uncle. She had by her own bright, pure, and loving spirit called forth by degrees in the heart of Sir Peter a softer and better train of thoughts and feelings. He saw and felt daily that there were truth and devoted affection in the world.

It was at this crisis that the great feud betwixt her cousins Walter and Francis broke out. Sir Peter had withheld the knowledge of them and their affairs as long and as completely from Minna as he could; but it was impossible to prevent her gradually acquiring a considerable amount of information on that subject. There is nothing so intensely interesting to young people as their own family history, and especially when there are circumstances of unusual significance or mystery contained in it; and there are always channels through which it will find its way to the most guarded quarters. Minna was too quick and inquisitive not to have learned a great deal from the old servants, though mixed with the distortions which a partial and forbidden medium is sure to impart; and her enquiries of Sir Peter



Minnah

for Peter's Lyceum



often startled him; and these had led him to communicate to her facts with his own colouring which her faith in him made her receive as gospel.

Of these two contending cousins she knew little personally. Walter she had never seen; he had been always at a distance, and by Sir Peter he was represented as a dissipated and incorrigible spendthrift. Undoubted heir he was of Much-Hatten, and Sir Peter always congratulated himself that that at least he could not waste, and as invariably added that such parts of the estate as were not in the entail he should take care that he never possessed. Of Francis she knew little more. She had never seen him, except casually passing riding, till of late, when Sir Peter had allowed him occasionally to come to Much-Hatten to consult with him on the difficulties with his brother. But there was something in him which Minna did not like; her nature seemed to recoil from his, and Sir Peter was well pleased that it should be so. He warned her, as she loved him, to have nothing to do with these young men.

Of late, however, the feud had run so high that Minna could not avoid becoming deeply interested in it. There were ridings to and fro of Francis and Sir Peter's servants. There were letters, some of which Sir Peter read with a dark frown, and flung into the fire with the word "Monster!" and others which seemed to excite him in an extraordinary manner, but the actual contents of which Minna could not prevail on her uncle to communicate. "Keep apart from this wicked business, my child," Sir Peter would say; "it is not good for your bright sweet spirit to sully itself with." Yet she did not fail to catch enough of the events to learn that Francis was in possession of all the property, and that Walter was in extremest distress. She listened to Sir Peter, but somehow could not prevent herself feeling a strange interest in the fate of Walter. Sir Peter was startled and astonished by the perception of this feeling, and laboured the more to convince her of the worthlessness of Walter, telling her that he was a reckless and empty boaster.

One day Sir Peter and Minna took their ride to the woods of Wintanrik. They went to the summer-house, and dismounting, Sir Peter hung the bridles of their horses to the rings in the wall of the summer-house there fixed for

such a purpose ; and the two ascended into the chamber, and gazed for some time over the clear autumn landscape. When they turned at length from the window, Sir Peter bade Minna seat herself. He then told her of the time when he overheard his two nephews relating all the wonders they would accomplish if that property were theirs. " I have tried them," said Sir Peter, with a stern and bitter expression on his face, " and the result has been just what I knew it would be."

Minna had listened to the story with wonder. She sat pale and silent. Sir Peter looked at her, and said, " My sweet Minna, you will now no longer, I think, pity those false young men, nor wonder at my contempt of them." Minna looked at Sir Peter with a glance that was full of the deepest sadness ; and going silently to him, she knelt down by his knee as she often did in their hours of free and affectionate intercourse, and laying her soft small hands on his right hand as it rested on his knee, she looked up into his face with eyes in which stood glittering tears, and said, " My dear uncle, you did a noble deed !—and yet, was it so wise and well as it might have been ? You raised my cousins to sudden affluence ; but they were only boys, and their mother was a haughty and ambitious woman, who had herself risen suddenly from her own sphere of life. Oh ! my dearest uncle, if you had given these poor boys the benefit of your kind experience, as you have given it to me, how different it might have been ! If you had been a father to them, as you have been a most loving and noble father to me—if you had won their confidence, and warned them of their danger, and strengthened in their hearts those beautiful visions of good, for they were beautiful, which they entertained—what might they not have now been !"

" Do you blame me, Minna ?" asked Sir Peter, somewhat sternly.

" No, dearest uncle, I do not blame you, you meant well ; but how I do pity them—Walter especially ! And, dearest uncle, is it yet too late ? Might you not by your powerful influence stay these frightful dissensions ;—might you not intercede and settle the difficulty, and give Walter a new chance ?"

" A new chance !" said Sir Peter, rising angrily. " Poor

child! you do not know what you say. A new chance!—a new folly!" As he said this, Sir Peter descended the stairs of the summer-house; he loosed the horses, and they mounted and rode away in silence. But they had not ridden far when they suddenly came upon a young man sitting in deep thought at the foot of a tree. As if startled by their presence he rose up hastily, and gazed at them with an excited air. He was a young man of singularly handsome and gentlemanly appearance; but his countenance was pale as death, and there seemed a misery in it that was unspeakable. Sir Peter's face darkened fearfully as he saw him, and the young man on his part, coming firmly forward, said, "Sir Peter! uncle! hear me! In God's name listen to me for a moment!"

"Walter Bethell!" said Sir Peter, pointing toward the summer-house, "years ago I listened to your vauntings: and what has come of it? Let me pass."

"I will not vindicate myself, uncle," said Walter Bethell: "I confess all my follies and unworthiness; but give me one more trial—see justice done me; and if I do not redeem myself, then I do not know what there is in me."

"Let me pass!" again said Sir Peter, fiercely; and pushed on his horse desperately, leaving his nephew standing with a look of despair. Minna galloped on at his side in silence, but tears were dropping from her eyes in torrents, and her frame seemed shaken by the violence of her emotions. That evening there was a deep, constrained silence between Sir Peter and Minna, though Minna strove affectionately to appease her uncle's anger by every gentle attention that she could show, by breathing no whisper relative to what had passed, and by playing on her piano the pieces that Sir Peter liked best. The next morning Sir Peter seemed to have dismissed his anger; he was kind and loving to Minna, and Minna smiled and beamed with the lustre of a summer morning in which the sun is radiant though you yet feel the shadow of a cloud. That day Sir Peter said he had occupation which demanded him in the library, and Minna put on her bonnet, and wandered first through the shrubberies, and then up the valley. She seemed drawn the very way they had gone the day before; and she went on and on. From the

steep hills on her left there came down straggling woods, and on the right stretched vast meadows. Suddenly, as she pursued her way along this path, Walter Bethell issued from amongst the trees, and advanced to meet her. Minna did not feel at all astonished; it seemed as if she had expected it. Her thoughts all through her walk were of what had taken place the day before, and Walter Bethell's presence seemed only a part of it. As he drew near, bowing respectfully, he said, "Cousin Herminia, I trust I do not alarm you."

"I am not at all alarmed," replied Minna, with a look of the most artless confidence.

"I saw," continued Walter, "that yesterday, cousin, you pitied me; and I have watched all morning on the hill if possibly I might get a sight of you. Cousin, you are the only person in the world that can aid me. I am driven to distraction by my own brother. I cannot long escape the emissaries of the law that he has set upon me. I ask nothing but justice and a new start in life; and that my uncle by a word could secure me. Is there no return for the penitent sinner? Shall I be crushed in my youth, and by my own flesh and blood? And will you not, my fair cousin, who are so good and so happy, will you not try to help me?"

Minna's tears were again flowing fast. "Cousin Walter," she said, "God knows that I would move heaven and earth to aid you; but it is not so easy to move Sir Peter. But I believe you, cousin Walter; I believe your earnest pleadings for a fresh trial of life; it were hard were it to be refused you. As God lives I will do all that I can; but do not build too much on a poor weak creature like me."

"May God in heaven bless you, Herminia!" said the young man, seizing the hand of his cousin, and kissing it in great agitation; "then I shall be saved! You will give me a new life; for you, and no one else, can."

"No, no," said Minna; "do not say that—do not hope too much. I am not sure myself; but I will exert all the power that God gives me."

The two cousins stood long engaged in earnest conversation. Walter Bethell sometimes spoke vehemently, and sometimes seemed lost in a silence of indignant passion; and

Minna's tears now flowed freely, and again she seemed filled with resentful thoughts of what was told her. As she turned at length homewards, Walter continued to accompany her, and spoke in an earnest low tone, as though he could never quit the subject. When they came where the hills changed their course, and the roofs of Hatten Manor were seen above the trees, Minna paused and requested her cousin to retire. He disappeared in the wood, and she hastened homewards.

From that day there was an active and unceasing endeavour on the part of Minna to bring about the reconciliation of her uncle and cousin. She pursued her object with the tact of a loving woman's heart ; but she felt that there was an unsleeping spirit in operation to counteract her exertions. There were daily ridings of Francis Bethell to and fro, daily passing and repassing of letters ; and Walter, with whom she had established through a confidential servant a safe communication, assured her in the most urgent terms that he was pursued with such impetuosity that if any thing were done it must be at once, or it were too late. That evening,—it was ten days from the first interview of the two cousins,—Minna again knelt at the knee of Sir Peter, and prayed him for her sake to forgive Walter, and open life to him anew.

Sir Peter sat some time in deep thought ; but he at length said, " You do not know what you ask, my sweet child ! you do not know this hollow world. Yet, I will confess to you that I have thought much on what you have said to me : for your sake I will save this prodigal once more."

Minna started up, with flashing eyes and a flushed mien, crying, " Then he must know this instant !" " Stop," said Sir Peter, " I will let him know." " Then do it at once, dearest uncle," said Minna, rapidly placing paper and ink before him ; and, as he began to write, she softly stole from the room, and the next moment was flying up the shrubbery. Walter had informed her that at eight o'clock that night he would await the news of her endeavour in the rustic shed there. It was past that hour,—a clear moonlight night ; and as Minna's light figure flew up the walk, Walter Bethell came anxiously forward to learn his fate. Minna ran on

almost breathlessly. "All is right!" she exclaimed; and the agitated young man, speechless with joy, seized her hand almost violently, and kissed it impetuously and with tears.

For some time the two stood as if unable to express their mutual joy at this happy event; and after a rapid exchange of words, Minna saying, "To-morrow, and all will be well!" she turned and hastened again towards the house as fleetly as she came.

Sir Peter had written a note to Walter, desiring him to come to him at ten o'clock the next morning. Minna received the note, and dispatched a servant with it to Walter, who was expecting it in the rustic shed. The next morning Walter had a long closeting with his uncle; and when they reappeared together in the drawing-room, Sir Peter said to Minna, as he formally introduced her to Walter, "Your cousin is about to join his regiment, and I trust we shall hereafter be better known to each other." Minna expressed her usually frank and undisguised delight at the reconciliation. She could see that Walter had made a very favourable impression on her uncle, and she flung her arms round Sir Peter's neck, as he took his seat on his accustomed easy chair, saying, with sparkling eyes, and cheeks that bloomed like the rose, "Good, dear uncle! you have made me so happy! I do so want to see all our family united, and loving each other as a good family should!"

"That shall not be wanting on my part," said Sir Peter, gravely, and yet with a loving smile at Minna.

"Nor mine," said Walter Bethell, solemnly, and evidently affected.

"Amen!" said Sir Peter. "God, in his goodness, grant it may be so!"

Sir Peter had invited Walter to spend the day there, and on the morrow he was to set off for London, near which his regiment lay. Sir Peter proposed a long ride, and during that, and for the whole remainder of the day, it was more and more evident that he was unexpectedly pleased with his nephew. There was an open, manly, and amiable character about him, that seemed to win insensibly on all that came near him; and Sir Peter felt that if the young man had but strength to resist the seductions of society, so easily fallen

into by a temperament like his, he should have much satisfaction in him. Walter had made him the most solemn promises on this head ; and now he had a new motive to steel and strengthen him,—and that was, the love of his cousin Herminia. To him—so lovely, so open-hearted, so liberally accomplished, and yet so simply and ardently good—she had appeared as an angel from heaven : his whole soul was devotion to her ; and he saw—for Herminia, in her isolated life and education, had not learnt to conceal her real feelings—that she was full of affection to him.

Walter Bethell did not leave Much-Hatten without an assurance that, if he maintained well the new trial of life that awaited him, not only the hereditary estate, but the heart of its beautiful inhabitant, was his own. He went, and from month to month the best accounts came, not only from Walter himself, but from the Colonel of his regiment, to whom Sir Peter had written to recommend his nephew to his particular notice. Then came a sudden shock to Minna ; it was the announcement that the regiment was ordered abroad for active service. But this was the most fortunate circumstance that could have occurred for Walter. There, amid great and exciting events, there was no temptation to him but that of winning a brilliant name. His courage and military talent soon became conspicuous : he was, ere long, appointed aid-de-camp to the commanding general, and sent to Minna the most glowing letters of active enjoyment,—in all which Sir Peter manifested a lively sympathy.

The influence of Minna was now exerted to inspire Sir Peter with a kindly feeling to the whole family. It was her ambition to soothe the asperities which had so long rankled in the family—to cultivate a spirit of union and mutual conciliation. She extended this to Francis, visiting him at Wintanrik, and giving him assurances of the cordial reconciliation of Walter, who renounced all claims on that property. This did not fail of its effect even with Francis. Avarice is the worst of passions to hope much change from ; but Francis was still young, and it was a profound satisfaction for him to feel that Wintanrik was wholly and undisputedly his own. He was extremely friendly to Herminia ; came frequently to Much-Hatten ;—and by degrees the

bright, warm, genial nature of Minna worked an evident improvement in his tone of feeling. Minna did not hesitate to call on the mother of Walter and Francis, Mrs. Chute Bethell, who now came on a long visit to Wintanrik; and it was amazing to see the different eyes with which even Sir Peter and she, his haughty and old enemy, came to look on each other. Mrs. Bethell had learned from her son Walter not only the generous conduct of his uncle Sir Peter, who had discharged all Walter's debts, and given him the strongest assurances of his friendship and support, if he continued to deserve them, but also the relation in which Minna stood to Walter's future. It is wonderful what a new aspect such a new and bright medium can confer on things.

Mrs. Bethell saw her son Walter not only the heir of the old family estate of Much-Hatten, but also the happy husband of the lovely and kind young woman who had so warmly brought about this auspicious revolution. She admitted most zealously the justice—and more, the magnanimity—of Sir Peter; and he now saw in her not only a very fine, matronly woman, but a very able and sagacious one. In fact, a new tone had entirely superseded the old one in the Bethell family. Over the money-loving nature of Francis the bright sunshine of the time cast a lucid veil.

And as for Sir Peter, there was a great light burning, as it were, in his conscience, and showing him how infinitely superior was the philosophy of Herminia—the philosophy of a loving heart—to his own, that of a caustic and malicious enjoyment of the punishment which human weaknesses bring upon their possessors. This light seemed to cast its flame back over his whole life; he seemed to see all his actions as a dying man sees them. Oh, how different to what they had ever seemed before! He saw his hardness and selfishness towards Chute: he beheld the evil spirit in which he had made over Wintanrik to his nephews: how he had tempted them, and left them in their temptation to fall: how he had fostered the social follies of Walter, by putting into his hand the means of dissipation, without accompanying them by a friendly guiding hand, and counsels that should have supplied the paternal care: how he had fostered, too, the avarice of Francis, and allowed a spirit to assert a

mastery over him that perhaps no circumstances would entirely be able to root out again. All this he now saw, and exerted himself to correct as much as possibly in him lay.

Years went on, and Sir Peter and his Pigeon might be seen pursuing their rides up the old valley, and amongst the woods of Wintanrik ;—years again, and there was another in company, Walter Bethell, now a man of high military rank and fame, and the husband of the happy Herminia ;—years, and a little flock of joyous pigeons might be seen in the wood-walks and the fields around Much-Hatten. Years again, and a tall, pale, aged man, but with a countenance full of benevolence, and a serene happiness, might be seen drawn along in a handsome carriage up the old valley, and through the woods where Sir Peter and his Pigeon used to ride ; it was Sir Peter, now old, but blest in the constant attention and affections of his inseparable Minna, surrounded also by her gay and happy children. Years again, and Sir Peter had vanished from the scene, and two tall, middle-aged gentlemen, accompanied by two or three handsome youths, might be seen riding in the same haunts ; they were Walter and Francis Bethell, now not as they might have been had not Sir Peter's scheme fortunately been crossed by the better spirit of Herminia, but united by a sober family attachment, which grew with years. Francis was always a careful, and almost penurious man ; he never married, but was too much attached to the young nephews and nieces who were growing up at Much-Hatten, and too proud of the family name, to think for a moment of the estate of Wintanrik being severed from that of Much-Hatten. They are now one ; Wintanrik being looked upon, according to the will of Francis, as at once inalienable, and as the provision for the younger children of the Bethell family.

Years have again gone on, and now the gay and lovely Herminia—gay at heart, and lovely to the last in the beauty which the sunshine of the heart gives to the countenance of age—has disappeared. Yet still the peasantry talk by their winter firesides of Sir Peter and his Pigeon ; they declare that they still see them riding, on moonlight nights, up the old valley, and ascending the woods to the summer-house of

Wintanrik ; and as the traveller sees its gilded vane flash in the sun, he involuntarily falls into a silence, and the memory of the good and wise-hearted woman who smiled away all the crookedness, the curses, and the evil from the long-divided family of Much-Hatten, seems to follow him,—for it lives for ever in that solemn old English valley ; and he only awakes to more every-day thoughts when he catches the radiant gleam of the roofs and the church spires of the next town.

THE WOOD-NOOK WELLS;
OR,
NEIGHBOURS' QUARRELS.

CHAPTER I.

THE HOMES OF WOOD-NOOK.

I HARDLY know how to describe Wood-Nook so as to give an idea of its remarkable pleasantness. It was a sort of woodland promontory, which ran out from the heights of Needwood forest into a vast level expanse of rich meadow land, through which meandered the beautiful river Dove.

Wood-Nook only contained about forty acres of land; it was, nevertheless, scattered over with old oaks and hollies of an immense growth, the remains of the forest, and which added greatly to the value and beauty of the place. It was about equally divided between two proprietors, whose fathers and even grandfathers had lived there before them, and whose habitations were set down among these tall and leafy trees like nests in a wood.

About two miles from Wood-Nook stood a pleasant old-fashioned town, the road from which to the forest ran close by, and from which, also, a footpath, crossing the Nook, led past the two homesteads into the delicious meadows beyond. This was a favourite summer evening stroll for the townspeople; and as I myself happened to be one of these, I knew Wood-Nook and its picturesque cottages from the days of my earliest childhood. Turning, then, to the left,

on the forest road, you ascended a steep and bowery lane, which soon brought you to the first of these homesteads, the old partly thatched and partly red-tiled cottage of George May, the basket-maker. The cottage stood close by the road, with its garden beside it, as full of flowers as it would hold, and with roses and honeysuckles climbing up the house side, and even garlanding the chimney. At the opposite end of the cottage, and almost as large as the cottage itself, was the shop where George May and his handsome son Robert worked all day long, from one year's end to another, as their ancestors had done before them; and against which were reared large bundles of peeled osiers, ready for use. It was wonderful how much comfort and humble prosperity had been produced by this simple weaving of osiers. This little homestead, with its twenty acres of land, and its osier grounds down by the river, had been purchased by means of it. True, the Mays had for three generations been sober and industrious men; and the present proprietor had given his children, two sons and a daughter, such a good "bringing up," that you could hardly match them through the whole neighbourhood. The Mays, nevertheless, had their troubles. The eldest son did not take kindly to the basket-making business, although he had been brought up to it from his boyhood: he ran away from home when he was nineteen, and had not been heard of for ten years. The daughter married a worthless drunken young man in a distant town, and, dying within two years, left a little girl, which the grand-parents took; for the father, marrying a woman of his own character, soon after the death of his first wife, emigrated to America.

These troubles were, however, over and past: the mother lived in hope that George, her first-born, would return some day a prosperous man, for he was a well-disposed lad, she said, spite of his aversion to basket-making; and the loss of the daughter seemed somewhat compensated for by the little Lucy, now between five and six, the darling of the grandparents, and the idol of Robert. The affection that this young man had for the child proved, in my opinion, that he was of a kind and amiable disposition: he constructed for her curious wicker-work chairs, and wove for her the most dainty little baskets, and might be seen, on Sunday after-

noons, down in the osier-holts, or strolling about the meadows, with her on his arm, or leading her by the hand gathering flowers. Young May looked quite handsome when his face beamed with joy in the companionship of this little child. Susan Dalton thought so; but we have not yet come to Susan,—we must see her father's cottage first. This was the second of the Wood-Nook homesteads, and the moment you saw it you almost preferred it to the first.

What a pleasant little spot it was! The heavy thatch was overgrown with house-leek and golden-flowered stone-crop. A huge rosemary bush, interwoven with jasmine, covered the entire front; from the midst of which the bright little diamond-paned windows looked out like cheerful eyes in a pleasant countenance. Just under the house, which was nestled into a warm sunny corner, stood a large number of bee-hives, from which there came all day long such a delicious buzz and hum as made every body think that industry must be the most cheerful thing in the world; and, speaking of cheerful things, I am reminded of that which made this second home appear, even to a stranger, remarkably cheerful. This was, that somewhere or other about the place, either cleaning the house, or fetching water from the well, or sitting sewing by the door, might be seen the pretty Susan, the only child of the Daltons. This Susan was a very attractive person to all the young men of the neighbourhood, because she was looked upon as an heiress; for her father, like his neighbour George May, was the proprietor of the remaining portion of the Wood-Nook land, with its well-grown timber and freehold messuage.

I mentioned the well just now, from which Susan Dalton might be seen fetching water. This, at the time I write of, was the only well at Wood-Nook: and a very picturesque old well it was, the water of which was so remarkably pure and cold, even in the hottest summers, that it was famed through the neighbourhood. It had been sunk by the father of the present James Dalton, and was a great convenience to both the cottages; because, until this well was made, they had to fetch every drop of water from a little way-side spring, at five minutes' distance. It was a piece of good neighbourhood in old Dalton, who was at all the expense of the well, to allow the Mays free use of it. At first it was

like a bond of friendship between them ; but, as time went on, they got used to it, and now it seemed almost to have become common property. And so it might have beeome, had not the Daltons always received one shilling a year from the Mays as a nominal acknowledgment of their own right.

As at the Mays' so there was at the end of the Daltons' cottage a lean-to, called "the shop," where James Dalton worked all day long, and all the year through, at his lathe, turning button-moulds. Formerly, when he was a young man, three lathes had been worked in this shop, for at that time the demand for wooden button-moulds was much greater than of late. Till within two or three years James Dalton had employed a journeyman to work with him ; but the trade grew worse and worse. Button-moulds were now either turned by machinery, or the demand was not so great, for Dalton had not more to do than would keep one lathe at work, nor even that steadily.

James Dalton worked alone, and looked back gloomily to the better days that were gone ; and said with a sigh, many a time, to the passers by, who would stop at his window for a little chat, and to watch the curious work go forward, that before long there would be no demand for button-moulds at all. This button-mould turner's shop was attractive also to children, who never failed to stop and pick, from the great heaps that lay all around, the most perfect of the perforated thin layers of wood from which the button-moulds had been cut, and which thus looked like coarse wooden lace, or little circular-paned window-frames. Hither came little Lucy from the Mays, attracted by the same object ; but not like them did she go when her search was accomplished : Lucy passed half her time with Susan Dalton.

Poor James Dalton ! If his daughter's face was bright and cheerful, his own was often sad enough ; for he had many gloomy thoughts and fears, which nobody knew any thing about but a certain lawyer in the neighbouring town ; and these had reference to a mortgage which had remained upon his little property from the days of his father, who, having unluckily got into difficulty, had taken this means of relieving himself. It was now thirty years since the date of this mortgage ; and as trade had been good for many years after this time, it ought to have been cleared off ; but

Dalton in his youth had not been as prudent as his neighbour, and now of late had found it impossible to pay his interest regularly, and he had melancholy forebodings that a time would come when he could not pay it at all. Every month added to his stock of button-moulds, till he had thousands of grosses in his shop ; and when the wholesale dealer came, he never cleared them off as he ought to have done ; so that the poor man expected he should at last be driven out of his own shop by his own wares.

Another thing made matters much worse ; but this was a grievance of longer standing than the badness of trade, and one even more hopeless. Every market-day Dalton got drunk ; and when he was drunk he was gloomy and morose. He never, in his younger, brighter days, had been, as many men are, jovial in liquor ; he was just the reverse, low-spirited and quarrelsome ; and therefore these Wednesday evenings were like a cloud on the rest of the week. George May also attended the market with his wares ; and he, like a good neighbour, had for many years seen Dalton safely away from the temptations of the market-day evening beneath his own roof, where he could sleep off his drunkenness and his ill-humour. His wife and daughter, who were used to this weekly grief and vexation, were usually submissive under it. When he got home they let him scold and quarrel, and make himself as disagreeable and as miserable as he liked, their only endeavour being to get him to bed, saying to themselves, “ It's all that nasty liquor ; he'll be himself again to-morrow !”

But he never was quite himself again on the morrow ; for neither he nor they reflected that these constantly recurring fits of drunkenness and ill-humour weakened more and more his power of resisting evil, and made him less and less capable of bearing up against such trials as life had in store for him.

Formerly, as I said, George May had been the best of neighbours : he had been a true friend in Dalton's hour of weakness : they had been like brothers. They might be seen there on summer evenings chatting over each other's garden fence : they exchanged flowers and vegetables, and performed all sorts of neighbourly acts : they might be seen walking down together to the osier ground, or by the river,

and through the grassy meadows, on Sunday afternoons, talking over family affairs, and sympathising with each other. All this, however, at the time I am writing of, had ceased; from little quarrels, which began on Wednesday nights—from grain-of-mustard-seed beginnings—coldness and ill-will had grown up into very considerable dimensions between the two men. Still the families remained friendly; and though Robert May seldom crossed Mr. Dalton's threshold, yet he and Susan were understood to be lovers. They walked together with little Lucy every Sunday evening; and Susan wore, every Sunday morning, a nosegay presented by Robert on their way to church.

CHAPTER II.

AN OLIVER.

THE whole of Wood-Nook was grass land. The Daltons, since the button-mould trade had fallen off, had taken to keeping cows and selling the milk. The Mays mowed their grass for hay, and took in cattle to graze in the autumn.

It was now early spring, and, as George May was about to shut up his fields for grass, he sent to his neighbour to desire him to secure his fences, which were bad and ill-kept, as otherwise the cows, and especially a couple of calves which he was rearing, could not be kept out of the mowing grass. From this little affair a mighty quarrel arose. Dalton patched up the fence in the cheapest way possible, which, however, was very inadequate for the purpose: the calves soon broke through again, and May, tired of expostulating, drove them to the pound. This was really unneighbourly: it was an unheard-of thing: it was enough to excite bad feeling, if there had been no other cause, said Dalton; so said Mrs. Dalton, and so said Susan.

The calves were brought back; and poor Dalton, who was sadly pressed for money at that time, still took no more means to repair the fence than by sticking in a few thorns as he had done before. Again the calves burst through; and this time May, who had consulted with a bustling little lawyer in the town, commenced an action for damages: here was hostility in earnest. Dalton could hardly believe his eyes: he swore that he would be revenged on his neighbour; and the first thing he did was to forbid his daughter having any further intimacy with Robert May. Susan was a girl of great spirit, and much as she liked young May, she was very much hurt at his father's conduct; and thinking that, with her pretty face and reputed property, she could have

lovers in plenty, she soon found an opportunity of breaking off with her old friend, and, as she said, giving him a piece of her mind into the bargain ; which was no other than a very free expression of her anger with regard to his father.

Dalton sat at his lathe, ruminating with bitterness on his neighbour's unkindness, and thinking how he could be revenged, when he suddenly started up, with a sort of fierce alertness in his manner ; for an idea had struck him. He took a chain and padlock which hung up in his kitchen, and walking deliberately to the draw-well, chained the handle to the wood-work and locked it, determining that from this time the Mays should not have a drop of water. This was an effectual way of annoying and inconveniencing them. He hung up the key against the kitchen chimney, and forbade his wife or daughter henceforth to leave the handle free. Neither of them objected nor remonstrated, for both had entered into the spirit of the quarrel, and thought that, at all events, it was but tit for tat, which was fair in any case.

All the water which the Mays now needed had to be fetched, as in former years, from the way-side well ; but it now seemed much more inconvenient than it did formerly, for they had been so long accustomed to the advantage and convenience of the well. This was what Dalton wished ; he wished to annoy and inconvenience them as much as possible ; he rubbed his hands and chuckled at the trouble he could thus cause them. May, on his side, grew still more angry ; it vexed him to see the trouble his wife had to fetch water, still more when he saw her pay a poor neighbour for bringing it in larger quantities for her weekly washing. He went to the lawyer in the town, and told him to show no mercy to his neighbour.

The feud between the Mays and the Daltons was talked of in the neighbourhood, and even in the town, especially on Wednesday evenings at the Nag's Head, where Dalton got drunk. There was soon a host of partizans for either side, who, instead of trying to make peace between them, looked on much in the same spirit in which they would have watched a couple of boxers. Each encouraged his man, and thus made the contest more desperate.

Summer came on : it was a summer in which there was no rain for months, and the scarcity of water was great ;

but in James Dalton's well there was plenty. He used to stand with the key of his padlock in his hand, morning and evening, and let the women and children from the neighbouring cottages draw water and carry it away, past the very threshold of the Mays, and past the very shop where the old man and his son sat at their basket-making. George May had the mortification even of seeing some of the very people who had taken his part, and who had been most violent against Dalton, now receiving a favour from him. Dalton knew this, and it pleased him. Every body was welcome to the water of his well excepting the Mays : to them he would not give a drop. Somebody told him that one of the neighbours had carried her bucket of water into Mrs. May's kitchen, and made her welcome to it ; and from that day he would not let that woman have any more water : this proved how inveterate he was. He now had his revenge, and he fancied that he was the happier for it.

There were plenty of people to carry tales between the two families ; and in this way the one heard what the other said,—but mostly with exaggeration. Susan heard that Robert May did not grieve over the quarrel between them ; and she was told of many things he had said, which wounded her no little. She looked gayer than common whenever she passed the shop where he was at work, and determined to let him see before long some new lover. Every body who came to the Daltons passed the Mays' door ; so that Susan had a good chance of annoying Robert in this way, if he cared at all for her, as, in the bottom of her heart, she believed he did.

One day Mr. Trimmings walked up to Wood-Nook about a new kind of button that he wanted to introduce. He was a dashing young man, a master-tailor, who had served his apprenticeship in London, and who had a great opinion of himself. He dressed well, and considered himself handsome ; and had long been an admirer of Susan, though she hitherto had given him no encouragement. He was greatly disliked and ridiculed by Robert May, who always called him Mister Snipps. He chanced to come up about the new button at a moment when Susan was very angry with Robert, and, quick as lightning, she determined to favour him to spite the old lover.

Dalton, who was inclined to think well of any body who purchased button-moulds, received the young tailor very kindly, and, almost as quickly as his daughter, determined that he should be her husband. It was necessary for Mr. Trimmings to wait and see the button-moulds turned. Dalton took great pains with them, and then proposed that his daughter should cover them with silk thread, according to Mr. Trimmings' idea. Trimmings stayed tea; Susan cheerfully commenced her work, and the result was all that was desired.

Things turned out according to Dalton's wishes. The tailor came again and again, and Susan was constantly employed on these new fashionable buttons, which took amazingly. Trimmings fancied himself in love, and only one thing prevented his making immediate proposals. His brother was clerk to the lawyer, who was well acquainted with the state of Dalton's affairs, and from him he learned that the little property was heavily mortgaged. Desperately in love as he was, therefore, he paused before he committed himself, for his intention was in any case to marry a girl with money. Susan, who in truth did not care the value of a button-mould for Trimmings, gave him, nevertheless, great encouragement. She did this to annoy Robert May, who might, she thought, have set things right between the two families if he would; for she was beginning to be tired of the feud, and to wish heartily for the pleasant old times when she and Robert were good friends.

Robert had tried to set things right, as far as his father was concerned, but he could do nothing. The son's interference only made the father more obstinate; he swore that his son should never marry Dalton's daughter. The continued hot weather, the scarcity of water, and the locked-up well, increased his rancour. "No," he said, "he would never forgive Dalton; the law should take its way, and if it took their last shilling he did not mind." This was the mood of the father; and when Robert saw old Dalton pouring, as if in wanton waste, whole bucketsful of water at the tree roots, and dashing it about in front of his shop, as he said, to cool the air; but still more, when he saw the smart young tailor, the identical Mister Snipps, going up to Dalton's two or three evenings a week, he became almost as

angry as his father, only that his anger showed itself in another way. He grew very silent and gloomy ; he thought he should set off somewhere ; he would leave the country as his brother had done ; he would enlist for a soldier, or go to sea. The only comfort he had at this time was little Lucy. He fetched water often in the evening to save his mother the trouble, and the child went with him ; and with her he prattled and talked, though he was silent to everybody else.

The heat of the summer was intense ; it was a very unhealthy time. Fever broke out in the town, and the doctors said it was owing to the long drought. In the midst of this the child was suddenly taken ill. It was the fever that she had. The next day she was delirious, and the doctor gave but little hope of her recovery. So complete was the estrangement between the two families, that the tidings of poor little Lucy's grievous sickness came only indirectly to the Daltons. "Poor Robert ! what will he do ?" thought Susan, for she knew how dearly he loved the child. She was ready to offer help and sympathy, but she knew that her father would not permit it, neither did she know whether it would be acceptable to the Mays.

Somebody said that evening, in Dalton's kitchen, that Mrs. May was crying, because they did not expect little Lucy would recover. "Then let her die !" said Dalton, in a hard unfeeling tone. It seemed almost a satisfaction to him that his neighbours were in trouble. Old May was the only one of his household who went to bed that night, and he, too, was anxious and unhappy. "You'll let me know," said he, as he went upstairs, "if I can be of any use, or if the poor little wench is worse."

The fever was now spent, and she lay on her little bed in that state of passive exhaustion which is more like death than life. Her lips were still parched, and it was stiflingly hot in her little chamber beneath the thatch ; and although she was too weak to speak, the occasional movement of the clammy lips indicated thirst. Robert, who, through the whole of this child's illness, had shown the tenderness of a woman, sat by her bed, with his coat and waistcoat off, fanning her, with a fan which he had made from a folded sheet of writing-paper. In the dusk of that short summer night, the grandmother, who had just dropped off in a doze, was

suddenly awoke by Robert, who asked her to take his place. The child, he said, had opened her eyes and looked at him ; her lips had moved, as if asking for water. The water in the house was hot and unrefreshing ; he would now fetch some that was cool, that it might be agreeable and refreshing to her, at a moment when he hoped a favourable change was taking place.

The grandmother seated herself by the bed, and Robert darted from the house with the empty pitcher, which, as it was now night, he resolved to fill from their neighbour's well. True, the handle was secured, but he felt nerved with strength sufficient to break an iron chain. The chain, however, was not easily broken. He wrenched at it with all his might ; and this made so much noise, that Dalton, who slept but lightly, and whose chamber window faced the well, was awoke. He started up, flung open the window, and looking upon this as an act of defiance and an attempt to gain possession of the well, he uttered the most violent threats and imprecations ; and as this happened to be a Wednesday night, when he was inflamed by liquor, he would readily have proceeded to the violence which he threatened. Robert, who, if he could have released the handle, would have drawn the water in defiance of him, now merely thought that he was losing time, and might lose still more if he encountered bodily his angry neighbour, merely replied by a muttered curse, and then rushed away with a frenzied feeling of mingled rage and anxiety past his own door, and down the high road to the way-side well, where he knew the water to be plentiful and free. How he reached the spring, and how he returned with his dripping pitcher, he hardly knew ; he seemed to himself to fly, and yet the distance appeared unusually long.

When he re-entered the house, the first sound he heard was his mother's steps crossing the floor above. They did not seem to him as hushed as his own had been in the presence of the sick child ; and instantly the thought struck him that she was dead—that his drop of water was come too late !

Before he could ascend the stairs, he asked in a low husky voice, which was startlingly audible through the silence, "How is she ?" At the sound of this sad foreboding voice,

the woman's feelings burst forth, and she answered with a sob, that "the blessed baby would never want a drop of water more!"

Had Robert May seen old Dalton stand before him as the murderer of the child, he could not have felt much more intense hatred than he did at that moment. He set down the pitcher of now unavailing water, and throwing himself into a chair, clenched his fist, and abandoned himself to a miserable sense of sorrowful bereavement, and a craving for revenge, which he vowed to himself never to rest till he had appeased.

The next morning it was noised abroad among the neighbours that little Lucy was dead, and that old Dalton had refused to Robert May a drop of water for her at the last moment. The neighbours cried "Shame!" and old Dalton, who now for the first time knew the true state of the case, tried to harden his heart—for he was too proud and too obstinate to confess himself in the wrong, or to express contrition; and it only angered him to see his neighbours taking part against him—those very neighbours who had been so much benefited by his well—and he vowed that he would do it again if it were to be done the next day; and, moreover, from this time forth nobody need come to him for water, for that now they should have none; and if they were so fond of the Mays, why, they should be treated like the Mays!

Susan cried, and tried to mollify her father, but she only vexed him.

CHAPTER III.

A ROLAND FOR THE OLIVER.

SUSAN was now very unhappy : she had loved little Lucy dearly : she knew how much Robert loved her, and how much he must now suffer : she deplored this family feud from the bottom of her heart, and the sight of the locked-up well handle seemed to her a bitter reproach. What would she now not have given to have seen Robert as formerly—to have been able to speak a kind word to him—to comfort him ! But she saw him not ; she felt ashamed of passing the Mays' door, and kept very much at home.

On Sunday the child was to be buried. Formerly the Daltons would have been the first counselled with : to them the Mays would have looked for sympathy in their sorrow, and they, in fact, would have been the first to offer it. Susan would have helped to lay the dead child in its little coffin ; her father would have given his choicest flowers to scatter over it ; they would all have done numberless little neighbourly offices of kindness, but they had robbed themselves of that privilege. Now they could do none. Susan sat in her room and cried ; she envied herself the former happy hours she had spent with Robert ; she fancied that she should never be happy again. She did not open her heart to her mother, because she so greatly favoured Mr. Trimmings ; and, moreover, overwhelmed her with a new and unexpected grief, with which she herself had only just become acquainted — namely, that the mortgagee of their property was in difficulty ; that the interest had not been duly paid ; and that in all probability, if help did not come from one quarter or another, the mortgage would be foreclosed, and their patrimony go out of their hands, leaving them almost in beggary. She had no time to think about other people's sorrows ; she could not sympathise either with the

Mays or with her own daughter. What were the Mays' troubles to them! Eight hundred pounds must be raised in one quarter or another ; and that was enough for her to think about !

Susan sympathised with her parents in their new trial : they talked over their troubles undisguisedly amongst themselves ; the lawsuit which May had commenced was not yet ended, and that would involve them still more. Susan proposed to leave home for service ; but of that her parents would not hear. The parents looked to her marriage with Trimmings as the means by which their help was to come ; but Susan's fidelity to Robert May was unshaken—nay, indeed, her love for him in his present sorrow returned with increased force into her heart. How could she entertain her parents' views with regard to Trimmings ? She was every way in great sorrow and perplexity.

On Sunday morning it rained—the first rain for many months : the rain-drops poured down like visible blessings from heaven. Robert sat in the closed shop among the osiers, and listened to the pouring rain. In the evening it was again fine, beautifully bright and calm ; and the bountiful rain-drops hung, like glittering dew, upon every parched leaf and flower. Robert thought of the little parched mouth which had craved for water which came not, and he ground his teeth in bitter anguish.

Six young girls, dressed in white, carried the little coffin ; and six others, in the same pure vesture, walked first, singing beautiful hymns in a low voice. This was the way in which the young and pure were ever borne to the grave in that simple country place. The little mourning company—the grandfather and grandmother, Robert, and a few friendly neighbours—followed.

The news of this simple funeral procession was brought to the Daltons by Mr. Trimmings, who walked up that evening, and who had met it just winding down the Wood-Nook lane to the high road. Trimmings was received by the old people with the greatest kindness. When tea was over, Dalton took him into the great evergreen arbour at the far end of the garden, where they were soon deeply engaged in conversation. The father made him the confidant of his troubles ; and Susan, wishing to be out of the way,

and wishing also for quietness, to think over what she had best do in her difficult circumstances, put on her bonnet and shawl and walked down into the silent meadows beyond.

The white attired maidens chanted their holy hymns as they slowly preceded the little coffin along the shady road, and up the beautiful churchyard path, towards the little open grave in the pleasantest part of the churchyard, where those beloved remains were to find their last resting-place.

The church chimes played a low and holy tune ; and then, in the silence that succeeded, the deep quiet voice of the clergyman uttered the solemn and consolatory words of the funeral service. There was something holy in the hour and the scene. A calm like that of heaven seemed to steal over the perturbed breast of Robert, and, for the first time for many days, he felt as if he could freely and entirely forgive. He thought of Susan and the old times ; he longed to talk with her of the little child now sleeping lowly at his feet. He longed to take the old man by the hand, and to say, let us all be friends : it seemed possible to him, and he believed that his parents must feel as he did. "Our Father in heaven," sighed he, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us !" He now understood the words—he seemed never to have understood them before—and he wept.

Instead of returning home at once with the little funeral company, Robert strolled down by himself to the willow-holts, and thence forward into the refreshed meadows, and so homewards, in the pleasant dusk, by the very walk which Susan had taken, and which would lead him past the Daltons' cottage, and which he would thus pass for the first time since the quarrel; because, on account of its bringing him so near to their house, he had of late avoided this pleasant walk.

But before the hour of dusk we must return to Susan, in these very fields, and to Trimmings, sitting with her father in the great old arbour.

Trimmings, as I said, had already gained some intelligence from his brother, the lawyer's clerk, of the encumbrance on Dalton's little property ; and now the painful avowal which the poor man had compelled himself to make,

accompanied by the request that his young friend would, if possible, help him out of his difficulties, or at least devise some means of doing so, showed him clearly enough that matters were much worse than he had imagined.

Trimmings was neither a generous man nor a man of principle ; he could have helped Dalton out of his difficulties if he had liked, for he had lately received a legacy from an uncle of more than that amount. He said he *could* do so, and his words filled poor Dalton's heart with joy ; but he made no promise that he *would*. Dalton thought not that any promise was needed ; he thought of nothing but that Trimmings would become his son-in-law, and clear off the mortgage, and thus all be right.

Trimmings was not, as I said, a generous man ; nor had he, certainly, any real love for Susan. And though he thought it might be a good investment of his money, and though he had already pictured to himself a smart little country-box of his own, in the place of the old button-mould turner's cottage, yet he wavered in his mind as to the mistress of it ; whether she should be Susan Dalton, the daughter of an almost bankrupt father, or Lydia Oglethorpe, the daughter of a jolly landlady of a neighbouring town, who had plenty of money, and to whom he would be a welcome lover.

Whilst old Dalton was pouring out his troubles confidentially, and, as he hoped, into the ears of one who was willing to help him, Trimmings was mentally deliberating as above. Whatever conclusion he came to, the old man, with great satisfaction, saw him, as soon as their conversation was over, turn down the meadow-path which his daughter had taken only half an hour before.

Trimmings found Susan seated at the foot of a tree, and he seated himself very familiarly beside her. She knew that her father had made him the confidant of his troubles, and he now told her that he had long been aware of them. From this Susan drew an inference favourable to him ;—he must, then, have been disinterested in his attentions to her. She ventured to ask him if he would aid her father ; she looked imploringly into his face,—for her father's sake she did so. There was something in her look at that moment which caused Trimmings to use a freedom he had never done before ; he threw his arm round her waist, drew her hastily

towards himself, and kissed her, saying that for her sake he would do anything.

At that moment Robert May passed : he had walked slowly up the meadows, with a sweet wish growing in his heart that he might meet his Susan—that they might be reconciled, and through their reconciliation that the family feud might be healed.

Now, however, when he saw Susan sitting by the side of his rival, and witnessed the apparently lover-like terms of their intercourse, he felt like one who has suddenly received a blow from the hand of a friend. Susan, who was so modest and coy, and from whom, even in their most intimate days, he had found it almost impossible to steal a kiss, now permitted the very man who had been their laughing-stock to use the familiarity of a deserving lover ! He felt almost mad. Jealousy took possession of his heart, and with it an instantaneous revulsion of feeling : he now thirsted for revenge.

Susan, who, as Robert had believed, was the most modest of girls, felt no less annoyed than himself at the freedom of Trimmings ; whilst the fact of its having been witnessed by Robert completely stunned and bewildered her.

" Oh, Mr. Trimmings, what have you done !" exclaimed she, starting to her feet and bursting into tears. Robert neither saw nor imagined her dismay ; and Trimmings was again at her side, praising her beauty, and promising to do much for her sake : he laughed, and was apparently in high spirits.

She was too unhappy to attend either to his mirth or his promises. They reached home : the old people received him with more than their usual cordiality, and did not notice the disturbed countenance of their daughter.

One morning soon after the above occurrence the Daltons were surprised by seeing the commencement of preparations for the sinking of a well at the Mays. Robert gave directions, and even worked himself. Rain had now set in after the long drought ; but that did not impede the work, for a very active spirit governed it. The shaft grew deeper and deeper. Never was a well sunk in so short a time. Before autumn it was completed, and again the weather was dry.

The first appearance of this dry weather occasioned con-

sternation to the Daltons; *their* well was becoming dry; the water was obtained with difficulty, and was no longer of the fine quality which it had been. It was very evident now what was the meaning of that great activity. Robert May knew that a well on his father's premises (which were below the Daltons') would completely drain theirs; and thus the tables, as regarded the supply of water, would be turned. All his calculations were right. The Daltons suffered greatly, both from the decreased supply, and from apprehensions for the future.

Susan, whose health began to suffer, not only from domestic anxiety, but from her own secret sorrow as regarded Robert May, left home on a visit to an aunt in a distant town. She now believed, from the unabated animosity evinced by Robert towards her family, that he had ceased to have any regard for her; and she believed, therefore, that her duty was to root him from her heart. But this was not an easy matter, as she soon found.

The aunt with whom Susan took up her abode was a widow, a poor industrious woman, who went out to work in wealthy houses for eighteen-pence a day. She had two little meanly-furnished rooms, and her life was a hard one. It was a poor change for Susan, but she was obstinate in remaining with her. She said that she would take in plain sewing, and maintain herself; and her aunt, who had a kind heart, obtained this for her from the houses where she worked. Under ordinary circumstances her parents would not have parted with her, but the increasing difficulties at home compelled them to consent; besides which, they hoped that the wealthy lover might be urged to more prompt measures by this absence.

The lawsuit came to an end, and, of course, it was decided against Dalton. He had not only damages to pay, but the two lawyers' bills; these and the foreclosed mortgage would complete his ruin. He turned to Trimmings for help; but Trimmings was shy of advancing money. The effect of these adverse circumstances on his mind was very melancholy: he drank more and more, and worked not at all.

The news got abroad that he would soon be broken up, and his little place sold. It was Trimmings who first spread the report; and he said, unreservedly, that it would come into his hands.

"To be sure it will," said Dalton, when half-drunk, to his companions at the Nag's Head. "To whom else should it come? for he is going to marry my Susan."

In this way he deceived himself; and yet it perplexed and troubled him no little that Trimmings would not take up the mortgage, nor yet even advance a loan of money. And thus the winter went on.

One day, during the following spring, Susan received a melancholy letter from her mother. It was very short, for her mother was no scholar, and seldom put pen to paper; but, short as it was, it conveyed much. It told her that her father was sadly down in spirits; that one of the cows had died in calving; that the lawyers threatened to take possession of every thing, and that there was no prospect for their old age but the workhouse; and, lastly, came her troubles about Trimmings: what did he mean? and why did not Susan and he get married? The letter was complaining and unhappy: Susan sat and cried over it.

As she thus sat, she was startled by a visit from Mr. Trimmings, who naturally inquired the cause of her grief. She could not let him see the letter, but she told him the contents as far as related to the troubles of her parents, weeping bitterly the while.

The sight of her tears seemed to affect him, and his manner was that of a sympathising friend.

"And will you not do something to save my father?" asked she; "for he looks to you for help."

He took out a pocket-book containing much money: he opened it, and showed her the contents, telling her that all this should be paid to free her father from his present creditors; that, in fact, he was on his way to the lawyer's about it, but that he could not resist the temptation of first seeing her.

Susan was very grateful to him: she was ready to sacrifice the happiness of her life, and give her hand the next day, if it were asked, to the generous friend who would thus save her father from ruin.

There was no occasion for gratitude, however, for there was a degrading and insulting condition attached to this proffered help, which made it impossible. She no longer wept; she stood before him with the crimson of indignant shame on her cheek, and refused his aid in the name of her

poor but insulted parents. Mr. Trimmings was very cool : he said that she was at liberty to please herself, and he also was at liberty to do the same ; that he should shortly be married to Miss Oglethorpe, who had a good fortune ; and that as to the little place at Wood-Nook, said he, putting the money into his pocket again, he did not trouble himself about that ; it would be up for sale shortly, and then, when the old folks had no better home than the workhouse, Susan might, perhaps, be sorry that she had lost a friend who was willing to have helped for her sake, but who now might be a worse enemy than even Robert May !

" What a wicked world this is !" said Susan many a time, as she sat over her needlework. The thoughts of her parents' distress and disappointment were never absent from her mind. She prayed to God earnestly that he would not desert them ; but from what quarter help was to come she knew not.

Again it was the commencement of summer, and a long dry spring and unusually hot weather left, as had been anticipated, the old well completely dry. The tables were turned, indeed. Water was not, however, generally scanty ; it only failed at the Daltons' ; it was like the rest of their fortunes, the poor broken-spirited man said. Their sole remaining cow and the two heifers, which had been the mischievous calves of the former spring, came up to the paling behind the well, and lowed mournfully for water. The trough that used to be always full to overflowing, was now empty. It was very galling to poor Dalton to go down for water to the way-side spring, for he had to fetch it past the very shop-door where his enemy sat at work. Such a humiliation as this had been spared to them. The handle of the new well was not secured, but he never thought of asking a drop from them. He rose early in the morning, and fetched it from the distant spring—unseen, as he hoped, by the Mays ; but the water thus fetched was bitter as the water of Marah.

Many of the neighbours said that it was only tit for tat, and that it was his turn now to suffer want and inconvenience ; others, however, advised him to sink his well a few yards lower, as by this means he would again have the advantage. Perhaps he might have done so, and thus have prolonged the

quarrel by retaliation, but that he had no money to spend. Poor Mrs. Dalton, who bitterly felt the want of a plentiful supply of water, reproached her husband now for his former hardness towards his neighbour ; and this led to many a quarrel between them, which only added to their unhappiness.

The innocent cattle suffered greatly ; their piteous lowing was very distressing to Mrs. May. "Do let us return good for evil," said she to her husband ; "let us give those poor dumb creatures a drop of water ; why should they suffer?"

"If the old fellow were dying at my feet, and a drop of water would save him, he should not have it from my well!" said old May ; and then, in imitation of his neighbour during the former summer, he went out and drew buckets of water, which he dashed about in the front of his shop and upon the road, that his neighbour might see it when he passed, and might know that now it was his turn to revel in plenty, while he suffered want.

But Dalton saw it not. Somebody brought him word that Trimmings was married to the landlady's daughter ; and the post brought him a letter from his lawyer, announcing that his property at Wood-Nook must forthwith be sold, to cover the demand against him, by order of the mortgagee.

These were severe blows ; and that same night he had a paralytic stroke, which laid him helpless on his bed, and partially deprived him of the use of his limbs.

None of these multiplied troubles were known, within the first twelve hours, to any one excepting the doctor. It was therefore not compassion which operated upon Robert May's mind, and caused him, as soon as it was dark, to fill the great stone trough at the back of the Daltons' now useless well ; and to resolve that, from henceforth, he would endeavour to be a peace-maker between the two families.

The hard words which his father had spoken the day before—"If the old man were dying at my feet, and a drop of water would save him, he should not have it from my well!"—seemed to unmask at once all the fiend-like cruelty of the spirit which had been influencing them so long.

CHAPTER V.

STRIKING A BALANCE.

ROBERT had not been ill taught in his youth ; he remembered, as a boy, that he had been taught by his father the beautiful and tender precepts of Christianity—" If thy enemy hunger, give him to eat ; if he thirst, give him to drink." " That thou shalt forgive thy brother, not seven times only, but seventy times seven." His father then would have endeavoured to act up to this precept ; *now*, how different ! He was no longer a Christian ; neither had he himself been one of late, for he had violated the very essence of Christianity, in so far as doing to others as he would they should do to him—in so far as returning good for evil, and loving his neighbour as himself, went.

Robert felt humbled and reproved ; and again, in the true spirit of sincere conviction, he repeated the words—" Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

That night, therefore, as soon as it was dark, he filled his neighbour's trough with water, and slept more peacefully than he had done for many months.

On the morrow, the post, that had brought on the preceding day such sorrowful tidings to poor Dalton, brought a letter containing very unexpected news for Robert May. His brother, who had been absent so many years, and from whom they had received no intelligence whatever, had died in Australia, where he had been pursuing a successful career as a wool farmer. He had left all to his brother Robert ; and this sum, amounting to upwards of twelve hundred pounds, was now conveyed over to him by his brother's executor, a respectable merchant of Melbourne.

How strange, how sorrowful, yet, in one sense at least, how satisfactory were these tidings ! The son and brother had been leading an industrious and respectable life, and in his far-distant home, and amid his many years' silence, had

not forgotten them. "Oh, thank God that he was no reprobate, poor lad!" exclaimed Mrs. May, with her eyes brimming with tears. "I said that he never would take to evil ways—I knew he would not! He was always a good lad, and I knew he would turn out a credit to us!" And then the poor woman, forgetting all her anxieties, and her so many years' reproaches for what she then called his "undutiful neglect of them," could not say enough in his praise. And she was sincere; she had been unjust to him in her reproaches, and she now would have given half her remaining life to have expressed to him one-tenth of the love that had always been in her heart for him.

The news of Robert May's good fortune spread through all the neighbourhood. What a contrast there was between the condition of the Mays and the Daltons! Yet from that first night when the water-trough behind the Daltons well was filled, it never was again empty.

Susan did not return home even to wait upon her father: her mother said she was not wanted, and the few shillings she was occasionally able to send to her parents were more useful even than her services.

It was now the middle of June, and bills were posted up announcing that on the 23d of the same month the desirable freehold property of James Dalton, with an excellent milch cow and two heifers, dwelling-house and shop, household furniture and stock-in-trade, would be sold by auction. Every body said that Trimmings was the man to buy. He had made up his mind to do so; he meant to have a cheap penny-worth; he boasted of it,—and this was galling indeed to poor Dalton.

The downfal of the Daltons was complete. It was now past the middle of June. The poor man lay helpless on his bed; and if this crowning misfortune were not his death, a melancholy old age was before him. No prospect could well be more cheerless. Although his limbs were powerless, his mind was unimpaired: he lay on his bed and reviewed the past. He was now humbled and penitent; and the circumstance of the now filled water-trough, which could only be supplied by his neighbour, seemed to heap coals of fire on his head. They, or some of them, were returning good for evil; and he felt now how noble and how gracious a thing

this is, and his hard heart was softened. Affliction, also, is an opener of blinded eyes: we see under its influence things so differently to what we did in our prosperity. This was the case with old Dalton. He sent for the clergyman, a good man, who had already tried, but in vain, to prevent the quarrel from going so far between the two old neighbours. The sick man now needed his consolation, and he asked it with tears.

Nobody told poor Dalton on what day his property was to be sold, for they feared that it would cause another stroke, or perhaps his death.

The desirableness of the Wood-Nook property caused there to be many bidders. Trimmings was soon outbid, and finally it was knocked down to a lawyer, who had been employed to purchase it for a client. Nobody knew who the purchaser really was. Young May worked at his basket-making all the day, and his father attended the sale, for he was curious to know what would be the fate of his neighbour's land.

When his father returned, and told him that a certain lawyer had bought it, Robert started up, and, with a countenance beaming with joy, exclaimed—"Thank Heaven, then it is mine! Thank Heaven, that my poor brother's money will be put out to such good interest! Now, father, we will have no more hatred, no more strife of bad neighbourhood amongst us! Now we will return good for evil! Now we will do to others as we would they should do to us!"

A messenger from the lawyer whom Robert had employed brought him word at that moment that the purchase had been made according to his wishes.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Robert; "then we will do what is right."

"What do you mean to do?" asked his father eagerly; and stopping him as he seemed ready to rush out of the shop. "Surely you don't mean to let old Dalton remain in the place, after the way he has behaved to us? You'll never be such a fool, Robert!"

"Yes I shall," said Robert. "Old Dalton shall stop if he likes, and we'll be good neighbours to him; and we'll have good neighbourhood amongst us, and no more quarrelling about water. There shall be one well, common to both houses."

"It shall not be my well, then, Robert," said the father, angrily. "With my money that well was sunk, and he shall never have a drop of water from it!"

"Then it shall be *his* well, or rather *my* well," said Robert, good-naturedly. "I'll sink my well deep enough for both houses. I love that old well, and that shall be the only well at Wood-Nook!"

"Hang the wells!" exclaimed the old man; but not as angrily as before.

Robert had not crossed Mr. Dalton's threshold for upwards of twelve months, but he now stood upon the house floor, and in front of the bed, which, for convenience sake, had been brought down stairs, and on which lay the paralytic man. His first idea had been to use no ceremony, but to speak out the good news and his kind intentions at once; but when he saw Dalton's altered countenance, he was silenced: his sudden unceremonious entrance had almost been too much for him. Robert, deeply affected, took his thin powerless hand, and looked compassionately on him, without speaking. Poor Dalton, who imagined instantly that he was come to triumph over him with news of the sale, looked piteously into his face, without the power of uttering a word. Mrs. Dalton heard some one enter, and, supposing it the clergyman, came down stairs in a clean apron. She thought that he was come with news of the sale, and she trembled.

Her surprise at the sight of Robert was great: she felt instantly angry, for she knew not what his visit could mean. "I think you might have stayed away," said she; "for you might have known that James is in no state to see company,—and least of all one of your family."

Robert drew her aside, and told her that he was the purchaser, and of his kind intentions towards them. Mrs. Dalton wept.

Her husband, who watched eagerly what was going on, and catching the word "sale," demanded, in his poor, almost inarticulate voice, "who had bought the place, and when the furniture would be sold, and when they must leave?"

"Oh, James," said his wife; "hear what Robert has to say! Speak, Robert," said she, addressing the young man; "speak slowly, and he'll understand every word. Thank Heaven! his mind is sound enough; and may God Almighty

bless you, for being a friend to those who behaved so badly to you, and for thus returning good for evil!"

Wood-Nook is again a happy place, where nothing but good neighbourhood prevails. The button-mould turner's cottage is the only one which has been altered. The shop, the lathe, and the great stock of button-moulds, are now all gone. Instead of the shop is a pretty parlour, with papered walls, and white dimity curtains to a large cheerful window, which has been exchanged for the old open shop window with the turn-down shutter, and which commands one of the loveliest views in the neighbourhood. In this room stands a white bed; and here the paralytic but cheerful old man passes his time. In summer, however, when the weather is warm, he is wheeled in his chair into the sunny garden, where he sits quietly near the bees, and where his old friend, George May, has a great knack of visiting him.

Robert and Susan May occupy the house: and it is a happier and a brighter home than it ever was in the Daltons' best days. There were two children playing about the door when I was last there: one was a little Lucy.

The old well, instead of being sunk deeper, has been filled up. Robert had this done before his first child could walk; and upon the place where it stood—the cause of so much animosity and unhappiness—he has built a little summer-house; and there, when the weather is cold or the garden damp, the two old neighbours may be seen smoking together their pipes; and there, as poor James Dalton never perfectly recovered the use of his speech, his neighbour reads the paper to him once a week, and retails to him the Wednesday's news on his return from market.

Such is the history of the Two Wells of Wood-Nook.

LEAVES FROM THE DIARY
OF A
POOR SCHOOLMASTER.

DEC. 18th.—These holidays are very welcome to me. Mind as well as body needs refreshment. The frost is still severe, but the sun shone this morning with the splendour of a May-day, and the slight covering of snow, which in these country-places does not become sullied as in towns, gave unusual beauty to the whole landscape. The peculiar character of trees is much more perceptible in winter than in summer, when the tracery of their branches is hidden by the leaves. I was struck by this to-day as I walked down the lane adjoining the grounds of the Hall. The trees here are of great size: the oak, the maple, the horse and Spanish chesnuts, the birch, the ash, and even elm, grow finely grouped together in a comparatively small space. Here and there a black evergreen, the Scotch and Weymouth pine, add still greater diversity. Bare trees, shooting up and spreading out their branches into the keen bracing air, have always had to my fancy a fine effect. They seem hard and gray, as if made of iron: each has its own peculiar and characteristic twist and turn and angle; each individual twig of the same tree differs from the rest—yet all have the same general character; and that in all lands, and from all time unchanged! This is wonderful! God's works are wonderful as they are manifold.

Instead of pursuing the lane forward to the meadows, I crossed the stile to the left, and went down to the old ponds below the Hall, which being now hardly frozen over are a great attraction to the boys. If I had wanted my whole school, I should have found them assembled here, with red and white comforters round their necks, and worsted gloves on. I have an instinctive knowledge of, as well as liking for, boys. I know all in the village, even the Sunday scholars. I soon discovered, therefore, that among the sliders was one who was a stranger. He might be ten or twelve; looked poor, and was scantily clothed, and neither had he any skill on the ice. He kept near the edge, apart from the others, and was making little essays with more perseverance than success. I watched him for some time. Among the sliders yonder were boys not half his age, who slid fearlessly twenty or thirty yards at once. I thought him one of those *mala-droit* beings who do everything in a clumsy, left-handed way, and felt compassion for him. To such, whether boys or men, the easiest things are hard; good intention avails little—their work is without completeness; they blunder rather than go through life; their very existence seems a blunder. While I stood thus thinking, he fell; it was an awkward fall, and I feared he was hurt. I stepped upon the ice, therefore, to help him up, but he sprang nimbly to his feet, and received my expressions of pity with a face crimson with mortification or anger.

"I am not hurt," said he, with almost a defiant air.

The lad was handsome at that moment, and I seemed to recognize his countenance; I thought he was one of the Welds of Kirkton, and said so. "Kirkton," said he; "where's that?"

"You must know Kirkton!" said I. "The next village."

"No," returned he; "I never was at Kirkton."

This was very strange. "If you don't know Kirkton," said I, "then where do you come from?"

"Manchester," replied he.

Manchester! that was upwards of a hundred miles off. I understood now why he could not slide. He had lived all his days in a close town where there was no ice to slide on. "And what brought you from Manchester to this country place?" I asked. "Have you friends here?"

"I don't think I have," was his somewhat singular reply.

"Did you expect to find friends here?"

"I don't know," said he, shortly.

I was at once convinced that he had something to conceal, and suspicions, unfavourable to him, entered my mind. Perhaps he was a thief.

"How came you to leave your friends in Manchester?" I asked.

"I had business here," said he, in the cool tone of one who seems determined to be incommunicative. My suspicions were the more confirmed. I looked keenly at the boy, and he met my glance with that proud defiant look which I had before noticed, and which gave to the whole countenance a singularly striking expression.

"Business here, have you!" remarked I, not without a feeling of the absurd pretension of the boy, and yet as if not wishing to pry into his concerns; "and you are disappointed in not finding some acquaintance here—that's it, is it not?"

"I never said anything about acquaintance," said he; "I have no acquaintance."

"But friends, then," said I, thinking that he merely quibbled about the word.

"I don't know," returned he, shortly, and, stepping from the ice to the bank, seemed disposed to leave both me and the water-side. But I was not going to let him so escape. I followed him, and we walked together along the field towards the lane. By dint of close enquiry I found he had been but a few days in the village; that he had walked most of the way from Manchester, getting only occasional lifts in carts or wagons on the road. He did not beg, he said, proudly; he should never beg. He wanted to get work in the village. He lodged at Widow Marshall's, and she had promised to get him some winding to do.

The boy is a riddle to me. I shall make enquiries from Widow Marshall respecting him.

19th.—Went down to Widow Marshall's this morning; found her busy in her frame as usual; she is an industrious woman. Fell into talk with her about old times; when she mentioned that this was her birthday. She is sixty-five,—the age of my mother the day she died. The poor cannot keep

birthdays, nor do they often receive birthday presents ; but for my beloved parent's sake I sent her a hundred-weight of coals, a loaf of bread, two ounces of tea, and half a pound of sugar. This little act made me happier than if I had kept my own birthday twice over.

Widow Marshall could not tell me much about the strange boy. She takes in well-recommended travellers to lodge in her house, and somebody, she imagines, must have sent the boy to her, but she cannot make out who, for he seems of a very reserved disposition. She had nothing to say against him, however ; and she is a woman with a keen insight into character, and not disposed to think too well of the class of people she has to deal with. He had thirteenpence-half-penny in his pocket when he came to her. He told her that he wanted to get work ; but she could not imagine what could make him leave a thriving place like Manchester, where everybody had plenty to do, for a poor out-of-the-way place like Moreton, unless it was that he was a lad of roving disposition, and no place came amiss to him. This is likely enough to be the case. She said she had got some winding for him to do this morning ; but he had now set off to Kirkton, and why he would go there she could not tell. She said he came back last night full of Kirkton and the old Hall there ; and when she told him that it belonged to Squire Jellico, as well as Moreton Hall, though he did not live there any more than at Moreton, and that it was an old tumble-down place, he seemed quite excited about it, and said he should set off and have a look at it. So off he went this morning, without a bit of breakfast, and she couldn't think what he could be after. Begging it couldn't be, nor picking and stealing, for there was nothing to be got in a poor place like Kirkton. However, when he came back there was the winding for him to do, if he liked, and if not, he must look out for other quarters, as he had come to the end of his money last Saturday night, and she couldn't afford to keep him for nothing. He was a queer sort of chap, she said ; there was something very deep about him—she couldn't make him out. Sometimes she thought he'd been used to bettermost sort of people, and then again he seemed almost soft. He was desperately taken with the ice, and yet he couldn't slide a bit ;—for her part she should

have thought Manchester lads must be used to ice. She shouldn't wonder but that he was gone again to the ponds, and that going to Kirkton was all a pretence. I walked down to the ponds on this suggestion of Mrs. Marshall's; the boys of the village were sliding, but our stranger (Widow Marshall did not know his name further than it was Charley) was not there.

The wind has changed to-day, and there is every appearance of the frost going. It has lasted already fifteen days. I warned my boys to keep out of danger, and then walked on to Kirkton; but I saw nothing of the strange boy. I did not make inquiries from the old woman at the Hall, as the dog there is very fierce, and I did not think it likely the boy would venture in.

Called on my friend Mr. Garner, and, though it was early in the afternoon, drank a dish of tea with him, which he obligingly ordered on my account. Have not seen him since the death of Mr. Jellico's son, who was boarded with him. The poor child was just turned of ten when he died. He was a boy of but small capacity, though of most promising disposition, and his death seems to have been a great trial to my friend. He had a fine salary with him, the effects of which are evident in his library. His collection of philosophical works is now very valuable. He showed me a present he received from Squire Jellico—the Works of Jeremy Taylor, in eight volumes, finely printed, and bound in russia, and which were sent to him as a compliment after the boy's death. I grieve to hear that the unhappiness between the Squire and his lady still continues. A divorce is now spoken of, but I hope it will not proceed so far; and yet no quarrels are so hard to make up as those between married people when they have once become public. There are fine points in the Squire's character, and many good things are told of his lady; yet a fatal *something*, nobody rightly knows what, though there are many surmises, seems to have sundered them for ever. This led us to speak of an unhappy event which occurred just before I came to Moreton, and which was, in fact, the cause of my coming at all; and, as I have not alluded to it hitherto in these pages, I may as well mention it now.

My predecessor at Moreton Grammar-school was one

Mr. Nathaniel Day ; he came from somewhere in the north, and was, it was said, originally a Dissenting preacher. He was, however, only known at Moreton as a Churchman, and was a favourite of the Rector and Squire—it was the old Squire, then : he was therefore nominated to the Grammar-school, on which occasion the salary was raised from thirty to fifty pounds a year, and two additional rooms built to the school-house, which made it much more comfortable. He was no great hand at teaching, however, as the last generation, I think, proves ; but he cultivated flowers with much success, and played both on the violoncello and the harpsichord, and was consequently made church-organist, for he had a great turn for music. Not many years after he came to Moreton his wife died, leaving him one child—a daughter. As the father was so much favoured by the Squire, the little girl—Alice was her name—was taken great notice of by old Miss Gadsby, who lived at Kirkton Hall : for the old Squire married the elder Miss Gadsby, who with her sister was co-heirship of Kirkton, and who inhabited the Hall till the time of her death, some eight or nine years ago, when it came into the hands of the present Squire Jellico. Well, little Alice Day, as I said, being motherless, was much noticed by old Miss Gadsby, and received through her means a better education than was suited to her station ; and when she grew up to be about seventeen or eighteen was reckoned one of the greatest beauties in all the country. The old man, her father, was prodigiously proud of her, and when the young Squire, then about three or four and twenty, came home from college, he unfortunately set admiring eyes on her. He used to spend a deal of time at Kirkton ; but his father, who had become, as it were, stupid with free living, and the old lady, who was nearly blind, suspected nothing. It soon became the talk of both Kirkton and Moreton ; and Mr. Day—poor man !—who flattered himself that he should one of these days see his daughter mistress of the Hall, shut his eyes willingly to all that went forward, and every evening after school hours went up to the Hall to play at cards with the old gentleman, and help the butler to get him to bed, for he was mostly drunk by that time. From one of these drunken slumbers he never woke ; and things now took such a turn with poor

Mr. Day as he never looked for. He thought all impediment removed out of the way; but others on which he had never calculated had arisen. Alice Day was the last woman young Squire Jellico now thought of marrying, whatever his promises had once been, and though in true justice she ought to have been the first. When this sad knowledge came to her father, his rage was terrible, not only against the betrayer of his daughter, but against her; while old Miss Gadsby, whose blind eyes were now doubly blinded, regarded the young and deceived victim alone as the guilty one. Poor Mr. Day had carried it with a high hand in the village, when he thought fortune would favour him; and this was not forgotten by the villagers. He was a man whom no one liked, because so many had envied him, and he had no friends. He had been very proud, and now this downfal and humiliation cut him up, as one may say, to the very roots. In a few weeks time, so much did he take it to heart, that no one would have known him. From a strong, fleshy man he wasted away to a mere shadow, and died literally of a broken heart. His few things were sold up, and his daughter, then near her confinement, left the village.

I had some little interest in the parish, and as the young Squire gave it out that he should continue the fifty pounds a year salary, my brother, who was then living on a farm at Kirkton, sent for me out of Suffolk, and I was fortunate enough to be nominated against fourteen other candidates. I came the very day that poor Alice was last seen in the village. Her father had been buried the evening before; and a melancholy funeral it was. With some help of the Squire, as was supposed, she went off to a distance, nobody knew where, but, as most people thought, among her own relations up in the north, where, I pray God, at this distant period—for it is twelve years since next May—she met with friends who would compassionate her hard fate. Within twelve months of the old Squire's death, the young Squire married the only daughter of Sir Leonard Harcourt, with whom he had a large fortune; but the marriage, as is well known, is not a happy one, and is now childless, which, as people say, is a great grief to Squire Jellico; for, in case of his leaving no heir male, all the property will go to his second cousin, Jukes Jellico, of Kent, with whom he is not



Alice Day



on good terms. Very unfortunate is it for Moreton and Kirkton that this unhappy breach exists between those who are the true exemplars of a large population which naturally looks to them as its head.

There is to be a great Christmas held at the Hall this year. Squire Jellico comes down, with many of his London friends, and great preparations are making for their reception. I noticed an unusual sight as I walked within view of the Hall—viz. smoke coming out of eight different chimneys. The gamekeepers are all alive in the preserves, and a butler and other servants from London are come down for the occasion. It is said that Mrs. Jellico has gone to Italy, and that the Squire makes these rejoicings in consequence. Hopes are entertained of his returning to live at the Hall, at least for part of the year, there being a rumour to that effect. It makes a great difference in a poor place like Moreton whether a large household is at the Hall or not, for money is sorely wanted here.

Returned home late in the afternoon. The wind is still in the north, and the roads are beginning to be soft. I warned the boys off the ponds as I passed them. I saw nothing of the strange boy on my way back, nor could the lads give me any information, as he had not been seen by them that day. It is singular that I feel so strong an interest in him. But there is something uncommon in his look and behaviour. Openness and candour are so truly the attributes of childhood, that we are startled by reserve and circumspection: yet he has not a depraved or cunning look, but a something singularly grave and penetrating in his eye, with that occasionally proud and defiant look which seems to resist and repel inquiry. I could imagine that he has had experience not suited to his years; there is a something about him, to use the homely adage, which reminds me of “the old head on the young shoulders.” I may be deceiving myself—may be converting a poor common crow into a phoenix—but I confess to a sentiment towards him approaching to affection. I should like to attach such a being to me; my heart has unoccupied room which yearns for a tenant; for early sorrow and disappointment do not close every heart against affection and human trust.

21st.—Must have taken cold in my walk from Kirkton,

as the roads were damp and my shoes not of the best. Have been confined to the house these two days. In the afternoon walked down to Widow Marshall's. Found her in some anxiety, as the strange boy has not returned. He owed her eighteen-pence for three nights' lodgings and victuals. I gave her the money, and thus settled his little score. We shall, perhaps, not see him again.

22nd, Sunday.—Better of my cold. Attended morning service. As I sat in church I was well pleased to observe our young friend. He came not with the Widow Marshall, but he looked clean and decent. He sat in the aisle on the free benches, and conducted himself well during the service. The Sunday scholars came in in an orderly manner, with their teachers at their head, and marched up the aisle past him. If he remains in the parish I must have something done for him.

The sermon, this day, was from the text, "They that are whole needn't a physician, but they that are sick,"—Luke, v. 31. I hope some unction of the holy word may reach the heart of our strange lamb !

The church was pretty full, principally because the Squire and his friends were expected to be there. But the great pew was empty, although the new stove which has been put up had been lighted the day before, and all duly aired. Some of the servants, however, were in the church. After service it was found that the Squire did not arrive last night, nor is expected till Tuesday the 24th, when both he and his friends are looked for. Seven-and-twenty beds are made up, so that a large party is expected.

In the afternoon I walked towards the ponds. The wind changed to north last night, and the ice is again firm, and, though it was Sunday, the boys were sliding. Query, can this be called breaking the Sabbath ? I had a discussion on the subject with Aaron Beak, the Methodist. He declares it to be so, and will not allow any of his Sunday scholars to play on that day. I saw my little friend again on the ice ; he was still by himself, but had ventured out much further, and was sliding pretty well. He is not *mal adroit*, as I imagined. I watched him for some time, meaning to beckon him to me ; but as soon as he saw me he came forward of his own accord, and thanked me for having paid his little

debt to Widow Marshall. "But," said he, with his proud manner, "I was not going to cheat her; I meant to pay her, and I shall repay you."

Without contesting this subject with him, I asked him to walk home with me, and I would give him a cup of tea. I doubted not but that I should overcome his reserve; for kindness has great power. I did not, however, make much out, as I reserved my questions for the fireside, when I thought Becky's good tea and some seed cake, which Mrs. Garnett had given me, would open his heart. When I reached home, however, I found Mr. Garnett and a friend of his come to drink tea and spend the evening with me; so that I was reluctantly obliged to send my little friend into the kitchen, where, Becky not being in a good humour, I am afraid he was not well entertained, for he left before tea was well over. On my way home, however, I learned that he had been, as he said, to Kirkton; had not only been in but over the Hall, and had been allowed to sleep in an outhouse. The old woman had given him some victuals, and had shown him the family pictures, and he had been in the church and seen the tombs there. He is probably an embryo antiquarian, whose name may become renowned in some future day; for such tastes are rare in boys of his age and class. I asked him what made him take so great an interest in these old things. Again he put on that strange look, and, turning on me his large grey eyes, said coolly, but with a flushed countenance, that seemed to belie his words, that he didn't know. I counselled him to get some work to do; and in reply he enquired if he could be employed at the Hall. I laughed; saying I supposed he wanted to see the old rooms and the family pictures there. "Yes," said he, in a much more frank tone than was common to him. I promised, therefore, to ask Mrs. Julip, the housekeeper, to let him go through the Hall some day; but, as the condition of this, made him promise to be a good boy, and get some work, and go to the Sunday school, to which I undertook to get him admitted.

24th.—It is strange how my interest in this boy grows; it is no common feeling of idle curiosity, or mere pity, that I have for him.

I walked to-day through the town. It has been all astir. The Squire arrived at eight this morning, having travelled

post all night. Several parties arrived in the course of the day, and the "White Lion" was thronged with postilions and post-horses. They were decorating the church with holly as I passed ; the door was open, and I walked in. To my surprise I found my young friend in the chancel ; he was reading the inscriptions on the tombs of the Jellicos. He can read well. I made him read several of them to me, and explained the Latin to him. I made him also read the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. But he knows these by heart. I asked him who had taught him. He said his mother. "And how came he to leave his mother ?" I inquired. He turned hastily away and wept. The boy has known sorrow, and the wound is yet fresh.

O God ! if it be thy blessed will, let me fathom the depths of this young heart, the secrets of which are known to thee. Let me bring him as a lamb to thy fold ! Amen.

25th, Christmas Day.—This has been a day of strange tribulation. A sudden thaw came on yesterday, and continued through the night. After morning service, the boys, as usual, went to the ponds, but few ventured on the ice, as it was giving way. The poor stranger lad, for whom, as I have before said, these waters seemed to have a strange fascination, went down, leapt thoughtlessly from the bank across the water which had already covered the ice from the land, and began sliding at some distance. He was now a tolerable proficient, and very daring ; but, from his reserved manners, his evident poverty, and his being a stranger, he had no acquaintance among the village lads. Nevertheless, some of them warned him of his danger. Before long, the ice on which another lad was sliding gave way, and he must have sunk had not the stranger rushed to the spot and pulled him out. But this brave act was only performed at his own sacrifice ; the ice broke in with him, and while the boy he had rescued was received on the bank by his comrades, our little hero sank. He made desperate efforts to save himself ; but the ice all around was rotten, and soon gave way. His danger was instantly perceived by the boys on the water's edge, and a loud cry was raised. Several ran for help ; and two, with noble courage, sprang upon the ice in the hope of saving him ; but a short time proved this to be

impossible. He was apparently left alone to perish. Presently, however, some of the boys who had run to the village returned with men, bringing a rope, but unfortunately it was too short to reach him. By this time he was becoming exhausted. But a new anxiety seemed to possess him ; this was to save something, which appeared to be a small packet of papers, which for some time he held between his teeth, as if to preserve them from the water. After struggling for a long time, and making wonderful efforts to save himself, he sank to rise no more. I know not when any event of late years has so much distressed me. I did not hear of it till an hour afterwards, when Widow Marshall brought me word, she having been down to the ponds to see if nothing could be done to save him ; for, as she lives at that end of the village, her house was one of the first the boys ran to in their dismay. Why did they not come instantly to me ? I ran down to the ponds, although I had no hope of life being restored, even if the body were found. A great crowd was on the banks, and two men with a boat and drags were on the water, the ice having been broken for that purpose ; but the poor body must have been floated away, for it could not be found. As I stood on the edge of the water, thinking of the poor houseless lad who had just lost his life, I turned my eyes in the direction of the Hall, which from this point is wholly visible. It was becoming dusk, and the large mansion was lighted up as if for a great festivity. There is a grand Christmas entertainment there to-night ; for though Mrs. Jellico is absent, the Dean of Windsor, who is a relative of the Squire's, is there, with his lady, and a large family party, and all the gentry of the neighbourhood—nay, of half the country, are invited. What a contrast was this to the cold, dreary night, the desolate water, the drowned but unfound body of the fatherless, motherless, and homeless boy ! Life is full of strange contrasts !

I feel as if I had sustained a great loss—as if life had been deprived of something of worth. What might not that boy have been to me ! What undeveloped powers lay not within him—what a wealth of feeling and affection !

O Lord ! thy ways are mysterious ; life and death are in thy hands ! This poor lamb has not perished without thy

knowledge. What he has been thou knowest ; and it is of thy wisdom, which takes cognizance of the falling sparrow, that his span of life has been cut thus short. Amen.

26th.—The body has not been found. I have thought much to-day of the papers which the poor boy appeared so anxious to save. They say that he was heard to exclaim with a despairing voice, “I have lost them!” just before he sank. He held them between his teeth, probably in the vain hope of keeping them dry. What could they be? My curiosity suggests many ideas. Perhaps some last letter of his mother; perhaps a little money. God only knows! In the idea that it might be money, some of the men were additionally eager in their search. I confess to a desire to know myself.

27th.—Had a strange dream or vision last night. It seemed to me to be the daybreak of a summer’s morning. A sunny mist of an opal colour appeared to fill my chamber, gathering round my bed, at the foot of which lay a brightness as of noon-day, and amid these, gradually revealed themselves, as if fashioned of light, two figures,—the strange boy and a woman of resplendent beauty. The boy had the same countenance, but beautiful exceedingly; and the woman held him by the hand. They looked at me with an expression of divine love; and I seemed to hear, although not by outward speech, these words : “These are mother and son; she was the schoolmaster’s daughter, of whom thou hast heard.” The knowledge thus conveyed brought with it no astonishment, but a calm certainty, as of eternal truth.

“Yes,” I seemed to say to myself; “thou art the daughter of Nathaniel Day, and this is thy son; and it is now well with thee.”

“It is well,” she replied. With that all disappeared, and I awoke. It was pitch dark in my room. I sat up in bed, and looked round; for the impression of my dream was still as strong in my mind as reality itself; but there was nothing.

Perhaps this singular dream or vision was but the effect of my excited feelings, for the loss of the boy has troubled me much. Perhaps supernatural appearances, so called, are the deepest of truths, and I have been privileged to have

the secrets of the grave laid open before me, to behold the dead, or, more correctly speaking, the really living. I know not. I dare not disbelieve, nor yet wholly believe.

It may be so. This boy may be the child of poor Alice Day, and the papers which he was so anxious to save might contain proofs of the fact. And I must confess that the expression of proud reserve which struck me so much in his countenance is not unlike that of the Jellicos. What would have been the consequence had he lived and asserted his claim of parentage on the Squire? God only knows! But he needs no earthly father now. The Great Father of all has taken him home—has provided for him among the angels. The subject can matter to no one now. I therefore shall not speak of my dream, for there are many Sadducees even in a poor ignorant place like Moreton. In these pages and in the faithful chronicle of my memory let it alone remain.

30th.—This day the body was found. A boy who was on his way to Kirkton this morning ran back to the village with the news that he could see the poor drowned boy's shoes near the bank under the ice. He was taken out and carried to the Nag's Head, near Widow Marshall's. I went down to see him; he was laid on a board in the great club room, and the coroner's inquest was held about three in the afternoon. The body was as fresh and the countenance as undisfigured as if he were lying in a decent and placid sleep. This was astonishing to all; and Mr. Hatherall, the coroner, who had lately lost a son, a fine lad of twelve, was so much affected at the sight as to be unable to speak for some time. As for myself it was more than I could bear. I stayed but a short time in the room, and, cutting off a lock of his dark hair, returned home, when I spent some time in Scripture reading, which I always find consolatory to my spirits.

31st.—The last day of the year. This being the alternate Sunday when there was no afternoon service, the poor lad's funeral was ordered for three o'clock. It was a parish funeral of course; but what did that matter? I who had been privileged to see the spirit in its blessedness, could not mourn that his poor perishable remains were unattended to their last resting-place by worldly pomp. Nevertheless, I paid half-a-crown to Mr. Coates, the undertaker, for the use

of a pall, and I and the Widow Marshall agreed to see the poor body laid decently in the earth. The funeral was somewhat later than was intended, owing to a farmer's funeral from Heathlands, which was to take place first, being after time. The Sunday scholars, therefore, were all out, and thronged about the Nag's Head door to see it move off. I went out to them, and spoke a few words about the poor lad who had come a stranger among them, only, as it were, to give proof of a noble heart and noble self-sacrifice, and then to die. Some of the children, the girls especially, seemed much affected; I marshalled them, therefore, in a little order, for the coffin just then came out, and they followed in twos and twos, Mrs. Marshall and I bringing up the rear. I had on my best black suit, and she wore mourning which she had borrowed, so that it was a respectable funeral.

Just as we got out of Nag's Head Lane into the main street the Squire's carriage drove up; he was going out, and two gentlemen were with him. Our little funeral procession stopped the way, and his coachman pulled up. The Squire seemed in a very merry humour, and putting his head out of the window asked Tim Stephens, the barber, what funeral that was? Tim replied that it was only a poor lad whom nobody knew, that had been drowned in the pond—that was all! The Squire drove on, and I pondered seriously on the mysteries of life. There father and son met; where would their next meeting be?

April 12th.—The swallows are come. The boys brought me word that one and another had seen them singly, or in twos and threes. The spring this year is steady and genial, and full of amenities. Worked in my garden, this being a half-holiday. The primroses which I set under the nut hedge are very beautiful, and the wild red variety which I brought out of the fields last spring flourishes well. I will plant many more of these roots, as well as of the oxlip, which likes my garden greatly. It is not every wild flower that can bear cultivation; the whole tribe of orchises, for instance, seems to resist human endeavours, while the primrose and oxlip, and a few others, take all in a kindly spirit, and make gracious returns. I have mentioned to the boys my wish for these flowers.

16th.—My desire to have some roots of the red primrose has led to a singular discovery. Surely we are only agents in the hand of a Mighty Power, and our lightest wishes tend to purposes, and are linked with effects, of which we ourselves have not the remotest idea.

I worked in my garden as usual this Saturday afternoon ; and when I considered my day's work about done, and was summoned by Becky to tea, the true interest of the day only just began. Tim Stephens and Jack Bartlett, to whom every close and dingle in the parish are known, brought me a basket full of red primrose and oxlip roots, which I immediately planted. They had taken with them an old basket for that purpose, in the bottom of which, it being full of holes, they had laid some old written paper to keep the soil from falling through. There has ever been a great fascination to me in written paper. Having set my roots, therefore, with which I was well pleased, I took out the damp and crumpled paper, which, having carefully freed from mould, I laid on the hearth to dry while I drank my tea. It is a folio sheet of paper, closely written over in a woman's hand, and appears to be a letter or narrative, but without either beginning or end : and portions of it, from apparent exposure to weather or other rough usage, are quite illegible. Beginning at once with the first word, the middle of a sentence, I write down as follows :—

"nor can be convinced but that I am your wedded wife, although I am an outcast, and have been suffered to perish in want. In this belief I die. My heart is broken ; but that cannot signify to him who has allowed things to go on as they have done. Oh, Charles ! let me recall the past"—
(Here many lines are illegible.)—"and known only to God, for to none have my sorrows and sufferings been revealed. I was assured of a legal marriage, and then, in my extremest need, I received from you an asseverated declaration that I had been deceived, and that I could make no legal claim on you, but must live a dishonoured woman, and that my child must bear the stigma of illegitimacy. Had I, then, no cause of complaint ? You blamed me for not submitting to dishonour—for not remaining to be your mistress when I knew myself no longer your wife. I would not receive your visits on these terms, and therefore the barest means of subsist-

ence for me and my child were refused." (Again a considerable portion which I cannot decipher.)—"my applications on his behalf were scorned. I received no answers to my letters; and at length came one from your wife! God in heaven! why did I not become mad? I know not. Mad I must have become, or I should have committed suicide, but that I had yet a tie to life; and that was my child—*your child!*

"I loved you in the young, wonderfully bright years which now appear to me ages ago, as if a portion of some former existence—loved you with that adoring, confiding love, which the young humbly-born girl gives to her wealthy lover. But still I was virtuous. It was necessary for you to practise the cruellest, the basest deception, for you to delude me into the belief that I was your wife, before I became yours. I saw reason why our marriage should be concealed. Alas! I should as soon have doubted in Heaven as in you. But when the true time for acknowledgment came—when no outward impediment stood longer in the way, and you were master of your own actions—what was the acknowledgment as regarded me and my unborn child? —that we were disgraced; that we had no legal hold." (Here, again, many lines are effaced.) "I did not ask aid from them, for I and my poor babe were worse than heathens in their eyes. We were literally without friends—alone in the wide world. I had a little school, and I endeavoured conscientiously before God to do my duty; but my health failed. For some time I had the hope of a permanent situation as teacher of a large national school, in which I should have been well provided for; but at the very moment when I thought all was settled—after months of anxious waiting—it was whispered that my child was not born in wedlock. God forgive me! I had represented myself as a widow; and a widow, indeed, I was. I was called before the committee without the slightest intimation of wherefore; and was desired by a grave and reverend gentleman, in the presence of twelve others, to produce my marriage certificate. Prevarication was now hopeless. The closest scrutiny was commenced. I dared not deny the truth, and with many tears, though I never spoke my betrayer's name, stated how I had been deceived by a sham marriage. But my candour availed

nothing. I was now a sinner in two ways : I was a mother though not a wife ; and I had lied to the committee. I had wilfully endeavoured to deceive them, and to bring disgrace on their philanthropy. I stood humbled and confounded before them, like the woman taken in sin ; but there was no Christ Jesus there to silence them with his reproof of love. Every hand flung a stone at me. I was crushed and overwhelmed, and I went from their presence like a detected thief. I had now not only no friends, but many enemies.

" My boy was now seven. The Saviour's words seemed spoken in reference to him, when he said of little children, ' For of such is the kingdom of heaven ! ' If it had pleased the Divine Justice to visit my shortcomings and backslidings with the stern condemnation of suffering, he had mingled mercy in my bitter cup in this child. Beautiful was he in person, and of a divine spirit." (Here follows another portion which is illegible ;—and let me now bear testimony against myself. I no longer read this letter with closed eyes. It was written by Alice Day—she who appeared to me in that wonderful dream. I have, of a truth, been singularly mixed up in this affair. This, then, is the very paper which the poor lad made such efforts to save. Perish it could not. God, in his inscrutable providence, has saved it from the drowning waters, and sent it to my hand. I must transcribe the rest, though the poor writer meant it for other eyes than mine ; and I must learn from the boys in the morning where this was found, and if there yet remains more. I now proceed :)

" My health was wholly gone. The friend who had shown me such kindness in the hospital did not desert me when we both came out. We took a room together, and worked for the ready-made linen shops. In order that no after discoveries might be prejudicial to me with her, I told her the truth. She loved me only the more for it. We divided our little earnings between us, and my boy was a child to us both. She was a much better workwoman than I, but she was frequently laid up with sickness. I was her nurse, and then worked double time. Our life was a slow death. For three years we thus struggled on together, and then she fell ill with ophthalmia. She was removed to the Ophthalmic Hospital, and in three days she was carried off

suddenly by an acute disease of which the doctors had not been aware. Her death was a great blow. I had thought of late years that I was grown callous to suffering ; but her death proved it not to be so.

"Another trial came. One of the good district visitors, to whom my poverty and my willing industry were known, recommended me as the female superintendent of a benevolent institution, which was just established. My few long-disused acquirements fitted me for it, but my marriage certificate was again demanded. I made this time no pretence of widowhood, and told the truth, only,—as before, carefully concealing your name. But the truth testified against me. The good district visitor shook his head mournfully, and my name was not even proposed.

"Eighteen months now succeed, which are but a fierce and hopeless battle against the cruellest ills of life—sickness and absolute want. Downward and ever downward is the career of poverty, if not in crime, at least in misery. I, who had in former years prided myself on beauty, and to whom beauty had been a snare, was now prematurely old; my joints racked with rheumatism, and my fingers incapable of holding the needle, which had once been the means of bread. I should have died in the Union workhouse, but that to go there I should be severed from my child. He it was who now worked. For eighteen months we have lived on his earnings. He knows all, for he is not merely a child. The hard realities of life have given to him the wisdom of maturer years.

"I write this with death before me : it is the only legacy I have to leave him. I have told him all the love which filled my soul for his father. I meant, perhaps, to awaken abhorrence in his heart ; but, like the prophet of the Old Testament, I, who came to curse, remained to bless. We have both of us received only evil at your hand, yet we love you ! Close not, then, your heart against your child !

"I hear that God has been pleased to remove your lawful heir by death. My child can never fill his place in the eye of the law ; but oh ! I beseech you with my dying breath, give him a place in your heart, and let him not, with all his noble gifts and his generous self-forgetting impulses, be an outcast in the world ! My last prayer to God is, that He

will incline your heart to your child, and make him a blessing to you—a blessing beyond worldly” —

Here the manuscript breaks off abruptly ; and, as it does not conclude the sheet, I imagine that she died and left the sentence unfinished. The beginning, then, only is wanting, and that I must endeavour to obtain if possible.

It is now long past midnight : I am too much agitated for sleep : I must therefore turn to my Bible before I seek my pillow.

17th. Easter Sunday.—Rose early after a sleepless night, and went in search of the two boys. I asked them where they had found the paper which was under the flower-roots ; and Stephens, who is a ready talker—perhaps because he is the son of a barber, who are proverbially nimble-tongued—soon gave me the information. He said he was looking among the old sedges, by the lower pond, for reed sparrows’ nests, as they were on their way to Crab-tree Dingle for the primroses, when Jack Bartlett, who carried the basket, suddenly exclaimed that he had forgotten to get a bit of paper to put in the bottom to keep the soil from tumbling through ; and just at that moment he saw some paper lying among the dry sedge roots ; he picked it up and laid it in the basket : that was all. I did not wish to excite curiosity ; therefore, after some further talk on casual subjects, I got them to describe the exact spot, and then set off by myself to find what further waif and stray might be cast up by the waters of the pond. My search was more successful than I expected. I found also, among the dry roots of the edge, a little old pocket-book, covered with dry mud, and which, having been saturated with water, was now dried by the sun and wind.

I opened it with a peculiar sentiment of awe and interest. The hands which last closed it were cold in the grave, and it was itself evidence of events and feelings which had been mysteriously laid open before me. The flap of the pocket-book was torn, and thus the letter had fallen out ; but the rest of the contents seemed safe. It is one of those “Ladies’ Memorandum Books,” which are published every year ; and this bears date fourteen years ago, and contained occasional notings down, mostly rendered illegible by the wet. One or two, however, I can make out thus :—“ May 6. At Kirkton

Miss G. gave me a new gingham dress ; it is pink, and very pretty. June 12. Miss G. angry, because I trod on Fan's tail. Have finished the mitts : Miss G. likes them. My father fetched me home. 26. Back again at Kirkton. I do love this old house, and all its old pictures and furniture. Miss G. cannot do without me ; she is very good to-day. Have brought my father's shirts here to finish." These are a specimen of the entries contained in the book : evidences they of a simple, innocent, child-like life. She knew not love : the serpent had not then entered her Eden.

The larger packet contained various short but passionate declarations of love, bearing date a year later, and signed C. J. (Charles Jellico), and two others of a still later date, evidently written after she had illegally become his wife.

I am tossed and tempested in mind. Perhaps I have done wrong in reading them. I think not ; for how otherwise could I know their nature ; and I shall make no unworthy use of them. But one thing, however, is clear to me. The unfinished letter was designed for Mr. Jellico's reading, and to him it shall go. The pocket-book, perhaps, was meant only for the boy,—I know not ; but it also shall go to the Squire—to the writer of those delusive letters—to the destroyer of that innocent heart, which has left its child-like impress on those pages.

God has mysteriously put these things into my hands, and I pray for His guidance, and that I may not run in my own strength. I was too late for morning service ; and though I am ever unwilling to set an example of absence from church, yet at this moment, when my hand needed His guidance, and my heart the consolation of His love, I felt the great outward temple which He has opened all around us for His worship as the fittest place for me. I sat, therefore, in the quietness of the sunshiny meadows, within sight of the boy's death-place and the father's home, and laid the whole before God, humbly beseeching his guidance.

In the afternoon I attended service. The text was, " Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it quickly," which I applied to myself. I will do quickly the work which is laid upon me.

This is Easter Sunday.—" Christ is not here—he is risen," were the words spoken by the angels to the weeping women

who were early at the sepulchre of our Lord. The dead also have arisen: have I not had a blessed evidence of this? They who on this earth have resembled our Lord in humiliation and sorrow, have like him arisen to glory.

O Lord, I thank thee for thy mercies—for the vision of bliss which thou didst vouchsafe unto me! and that I was counted worthy to know thy secret dealings with those who on earth were thy weeping children! Amen.

Easter Monday.—This being holiday, I put on my Sunday suit, and walked up to the hall. I felt considerably agitated, as my errand was so strange and altogether unprecedented; and the Squire, though well disposed towards me, is not a man of easy access, or one who relishes the familiar approach of inferiors. I found him, however, more affable than usual: he had just finished breakfast, and conducted me into the library, where, he said, he preferred transacting business. He seated himself in a large leathern chair, and pointing to me to take another, turned to me with a laugh, saying—

"Well, Mr. Goodman, what trouble have you now in hand? Is the school-house burned down, or have the children got the small-pox?"

"Sir," I said, "it is not a trifle which brings me to you; neither is it a laughing matter."

Here I related, as briefly as possible, the history of the boy's sojourn amongst us, recalling to his mind the funeral which had stopped his carriage on the last evening of the old year. Without exciting his suspicions as to what my communication tended to, I then added, that, strange as it might appear, the papers about which the last living thoughts of the boy had been occupied, and which had come into my hands, appeared to have reference to himself; and that I considered it right, therefore, that they should pass direct from my hands into his own.

The Squire looked somewhat grave; but he assumed a careless air, and, putting forth his hand to receive the packet, said—

"Very good. You can leave them with me, and when I have leisure I will attend to them."

With this I took my leave.

19th.—No message from the Squire. I feel anxious and

perturbed. I desire to know the effect produced on this hard man of the world by that affecting chronicle of suffering caused by himself.

23d, Saturday.—The Squire came to my house to-day. I had just finished tea when Becky rushed in, all excitement, saying that he was walking in the garden, and desired to speak with me. I went out, well knowing that this visit could have reference to only one subject. Before going out, however, I bade my servant Becky go and inquire after Joseph Pudsey, who, though an old man, is ill of hooping-cough—a very rare case; for I wished her out of the way before I brought the Squire into the house, having reason to suspect her of listening.

The first words the Squire put to me were, whether I had read the papers which I had put into his hand.

I replied that I had done so; and, moreover, I again related to him how they had fallen into my hands; for though I had already told him this, he seemed to have forgotten it.

He said I had done very wrong, as they ought to have been given at once into his hand, seeing they were on private business, and that of a serious nature. I showed him, in return, how impossible it would have been for me to know for whom they were designed, unless they had been first read; saying, furthermore, that it was well that they fell into my hands instead of others', who might not have respected their contents as I had done. He could not but confess the truth of my words; and then, resting his head upon his hand, sunk in deep thought for some time, his countenance wearing an air of deep dejection.

I respected his feelings too much to break the silence, and waited for him to speak. At length he said in a low and tremulous voice, "You are a man of honour, Mr. Goodman; and I believe that any confidence reposed in you will be inviolate. In your eyes I appear at this moment as a villain; few, however, are so bad but that something may be said in their extenuation. I will now, as regards this most unhappy affair, relate to you some facts which have never before passed my lips; and these, though they may not excuse me, will prove at least that I am not wholly hardened, and that I have not been without my own share of suffering."

For half an hour he spoke, and I listened without interrupting him, satisfied that not only are the wages of sin death, but that the greater the violation of principle and the sin against knowledge, the severer the penalty inflicted by an accusing conscience. I pitied the man whom I thus saw agonised by self-condemnation ; but I will not reveal—will not commit even to this sacred transcript of my life and my feelings—the agony of another, who, in a moment of self-forgetfulness, perhaps, laid bare before me the secrets of his own soul.

Father of love and mercy ! I bless thee that thou leavest none, not even the hardest and proudest sinner, without a witness for Thee, which sooner or later will make itself heard, and bring back the wanderer to Thee, through the redeeming love of our Saviour, Christ.

24th.—I am in a singular position with regard to the Squire. I know too much regarding him either for his peace or my own. I regret the confidence which he has placed in me ; he will soon regret it himself, if he have not done so already. It will be galling to a proud spirit like his, and he will probably seek to remove me from this place.

26th.—Becky brings me word that the Squire has suddenly left the hall : he set off for London last night, travelling post as usual. Some think this has reference to his lady, who is now in Rome. More probably, I think, it is owing to his communication to me. He has, perhaps, left this neighbourhood for ever.

30th.—Letter from the Squire in London. He offers me his interest in obtaining the situation of master of a grammar-school in Yorkshire, the income of which is one hundred pounds per annum. I am taken by surprise. I know not whether this is meant by him as a punishment or a reward. I do not of my own free will incline to leave this place, to the rising generation of which I am become greatly attached. Yorkshire is a land of strangers to me, and I feel as one about to be disinherited : yet, so full of contradictory impulses is the heart, that I do not feel free to decline it. I am in a sore perplexity.

O Lord ! I am in thy hands : do thou guide me, and all will then be well !

THE HUNNYBUNS AT THE SEA-SIDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNNYBUNS LOCATE THEMSELVES AT A RURAL SPOT BY THE SEA.

MR. HUNNYBUN's business, which depended on the sitting of Parliament, being over with the prorogation of that august body, he determined to do as the members of both houses had done, fly off into the country. By the fatigues of a laborious session, made particularly so to Mr. Hunnybun by the habit that honourable members of late had got of calling for returns on all possible subjects, our worthy friend felt his whole system relaxed, and therefore, as he jocosely observed to Mrs. Hunnybun, he resolved to relax himself a little by the sea—the relaxation of that element being known to be the homeopathic remedy for the relaxation occasioned by over-work in town.

This was good news for Mrs. Hunnybun, for the two grandchildren, Quintus and Mira, and for the grown-up nephew and niece, Mr. Augustus and Miss Angela Hunnybun. There was a general jubilation at breakfast as Mr. Hunnybun announced this agreeable resolve. Mrs. Hunnybun at once proposed a few weeks' sojourn in the Isle of Wight; the children had an idea that Broadstairs would be a very nice place, because, as they well knew that they should get a good share of plunging in the sea, they fancied that it must be very safe and pleasant to go down broad-stairs into the terrific element. Mr. Hunnybun laughed at this origi-

nal idea, but said nothing till he had had the opinion of his nephew and niece. Mr. Augustus Hunnybun was for no mere dabblings and three-stride excursions, as he called them, but to dash off at once to the Continent. Wonders, he remarked, could be done in a couple of months. There was a party projecting a yachting voyage to the north. They were to coast the west of Scotland ; pass through the Western Isles ; see Staffa and Iona ; take in a cargo of terriers at the Isle of Skye ; then to the Faro Isles, and thence to Iceland. Then they were to make an expedition to the Geysers and to Hecla, boil their eggs in the hot fountains, gather reindeer moss, shoot wild fowl, make researches into the ancient language and learning of the mother country of Scandinavia, and achieve other matters, all in the steam speed and capacity of the present day. Then they were to touch on their return at Bergen, advance into the country and shoot bears and capercailsies, explore forests and mountains, and make extensive geological, zoological, ethnological, and philological observations—all in ten days or so.

Mr. Hunnybun smiled sagaciously at the comprehensive scheme of Augustus, and asked Angela what was her idea of a trip. Angela preferred a trip southward : just taking Normandy, Paris—a week there—an excursion on the great Tonnere Railway, a rapid view of Switzerland, Savoy, Lombardy, Rome, Naples, and so home by the Pyrenees and Oporto.

“ Upon my word !” exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun, “ and that the rising generation call ‘ rest,’ and ‘ relaxation,’ and ‘ recruiting one’s exhausted frame !’ Upon my word ! I am very much afraid I shall have but little of your company, for I am projecting nothing half so magnificent. As for Norway and Naples—heaven help us ! Why, my dear Mrs. Hunnybun, I don’t even think of venturing so far south as Ryde, nor even Southampton. I am disposed nor’ardly ; but not quite to Bergen and the Faro Isles. What think you of Freestone, by Boston in the Lincolnshire Wash ; or to Bridlington Quay ? ”

“ Freestone ! Bridlington Quay ! ” Never was there such a fall from a balloon. All sat chapfallen and woebegone.

"Well," said Mr. Hunnybun, "perhaps one might venture a little further; say Filey, or Scarborough. I want rest, and yet a bracing air. As for you, Augustus, you can fish, and shoot, and ride; and mind, Angela, that you take your habit with you—there are splendid sands at Filey, I hear; and young ladies look well on horseback. And while I and your aunt take our quiet strolls on the cliffs, you young ones can have a sail or a gallop, that may better suit the motion of your young blood. As for Quintus and Mira, I'll answer for there being sand-spades, and young crabs, and star-fish, and shells, and precious stones, enough to fill up all their time, with a donkey or so into the bargain."

"Well, that's not so very bad, after all," said Augustus, musingly, "I and Angela will have some famous gallops: there are horses to be had, of course?"

"Of course!" said Mr. Hunnybun.

"And pleasure-boats, and all that sort of thing?"

"Pleasure-boats, and all sorts of things, no doubt," added Mr. Hunnybun.

Angela brightened up, spite of all her gay visions of Paris and Naples; and good Mrs. Hunnybun thought that she preferred Yorkshire to the Isle of Wight. It was not so hackneyed; and they would not be so far off Whitby, of which she had read in *Marmion*.

"And then," added Mr. Hunnybun, "we can kill two birds with one stone."

"What birds?" asked Quintus and Mira, "puffins or penguins?"

"No," said Mr. Hunnybun, delighted that every one had fallen so agreeably into his scheme, after their more soaring speculations: "I mean our health and the Great Northern Railway."

"Kill our health, my dear, and the Great Northern Railway!" said Mrs. Hunnybun, in astonishment.

"Well," replied Mr. Hunnybun, "my metaphor was not exactly the best, but my intentions were. I mean, we can travel by the Great Northern, in which I have a good number of shares. It is just opened—quite *à propos*—and we shall see how it works."

So the Hunnybun family were at once in the ardour of packing. Augustus sallied forth to make sundry purchases

of personal and sporting apparatus. Angela thought of sundry others on her own account. Mrs. Hunnybun must have strong shoes for the children, and over-shoes for herself. Mr. Hunnybun had to go to the Bank, and to supply himself with a new umbrella and walking-cane ; and the next morning the Hunnybun family were seen setting off in a couple of heavily-laden cabs for the station at King's Cross.

Soon they were skimming along through a succession of little tunnels, and over a pleasant country, greatly to the satisfaction of the whole party. Anon they saw the old town of Hatfield, with the battlements of the ancient manor peeping over the housetops, and the wooded park on the right ; Mr. Hunnybun taking care to remind his family that there the good Queen Elizabeth passed some of her carefully-watched and guarded youth. Away they posted past Huntingdon, the whilom residence of the great brewer Cromwell, who brewed such a tempest in England, past the church at Peterborough, and over the flats of Lincolnshire, greeting the lofty "Stump of Boston," and away on for the Humber.

Mr. Hunnybun contemplated with profound satisfaction the accurate time kept by the train, according to the bill furnished him at the Station. As a proprietor it inspired him with pride and hope, and his remarks were echoed by a substantial-looking traveller, who, with a clever, knowing look, and a huge, thick pilot-coat under him, as if expecting rough weather this August, sat opposite him in the well-cushioned and airy carriage.

To all the Hunnybuns' historical recollections, whether they regarded Queen Bess, Oliver Cromwell, Hereward the Saxon, or the learned monks of Croyland, the sagacious stranger replied,—“Yes, they were all true English characters ; there was no country like England ; England was the top of the world.” This compartment of the carriage accommodated eight passengers ; and this solid-looking English character, with a gentleman whom it was soon discovered farmed his own land, filled the two seats unoccupied by the Hunnybuns.

“ You're a traveller, Sir,” observed Mr. Augustus Hunnybun, as if with a little malice prepense.

"How did you find that out, young gentleman?" asked the stranger with the thick blue pilot-coat.

"I judge so," answered Augustus, "or you could not so precisely have settled what England was, and what it was not."

"You judge rightly," replied the stranger, "I have seen a thing or two abroad. I've gone through France by *Dyon* into *Savoy*, through *Genoa*, *Lombardy*, *Veeniss*, *Lucre*, *Pysar*, and so on to *Naples*, *Maltar*, *Marseales*, and then back again."

All wondered at the extensive travels of this knowing-looking gentleman, and Mr. Hunnybun remarked to Mrs. Hunnybun in a whisper,—“Every inch an Englishman; he scorns to give any thing but an English pronunciation to foreign towns and counties.”

Mr. Hunnybun, who was what is termed English to the back-bone himself, felt respect for his uncompromising countryman, and entered into conversation with him on the places he had visited, and that to such effect, that the young farmer said,—

“Bless me, sir! I envy your power of travelling through such fine countries. The next time you go, I wish you'd take me under your wing.”

“Under my wing!” ejaculated the very English stranger; “why you are no chicken yourself; you could go there without either me or your mother, I guess.”

“I cannot speak a word of any language but my own, sir,” said the young man, somewhat apologetically.

“Whose language would you speak but your own?” returned the stranger: “I speak none but my own blessed mother tongue. No, no; there's no language like good sound English; and if a man cannot speak that, why I'd scorn him, and have nothing to do with such a thick-headed fellow.”

“But I should look like a fool,” said the young landed proprietor, “if any one spoke to me in French or Italian, and I could not answer him.”

“But you need not look like a fool,” said the stout stranger, dragging out his huge blue pilot-coat, and placing it on his knee as he looked out of the window, as if contem-

plating a departure,—“you need not look like a fool, unless you are one. Do I look like a fool, think you?—and nothing but the Queen’s blessed English ever passed my lips,—and for why? Because I never learnt any other, and would not if I could. It’s for them foreigners to learn my lingo, if they mean to trade with me.”

“ You travel in trade !” said Augustus, in astonishment.

“ In trade, to be sure, my young gentleman; for what else should a sensible man travel ?” rejoined the stranger, pulling out his ticket in readiness to stop. “ What should a true Englishman travel for—if he is worth calling an Englishman—and not to eat what they call ‘bully,’ but what I call beef done to death in the soup copper, and to stare at rocks and waves, and hear people sing. One can see and hear all these things better at home. I sit still, sir, and let all these come to me. That’s it ! But when money is to be made, and the country’s capital is to be augmented, why, then I’m up and off, as I am now; for here’s Great Grimsby, and I’ve a ship come in, or I’m much mistaken.”

The whistle sounded, the train slackened its pace, the sea gleamed up blue from the right, and the great, knowing, very English traveller, cried, “ Here !” as the man at the station cried “ Grimsby !” and was in the act of descending with a “ Good-day to ye !” when Mr. Hunnybun begged he would favour him with his address. The stranger took a card from his waistcoat-pocket, and was gone.

“ An Englishman every inch !” exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun. What character! what independence! the man makes all the world bend to his inborn vigour ! A true-born Anglo-saxon, a true-born Briton—the whole of him, mind and body, bone and muscle !”

“ Who is he ?” asked Augustus.

Mr. Hunnybun was adjusting his spectacles, when looking at the card his face exhibited the most unfeigned astonishment. “ Heaven and earth !” he exclaimed, “ who could have thought it.”

“ What !” ejaculated the whole party, “ who can it be ?”

Mr. Hunnybun took off his spectacles, gave a great puff with distended cheeks, as if sending forth a whole gust of wonder, and handed the card, of a very plain and English description, rather soiled but not the more illegible for that;

for the address was printed in bold Roman letters. Augustus read it: "Mr Michael Purdy, Bone Merchant, Whitechapel."

A very impressive silence followed this discovery: for a moment Mr. Hunnybun's face flushed a deep red, Mrs. Hunnybun smiled, Miss Hunnybun tittered, and Mr. Augustus thrust his head out of the window to avoid laughing directly in his uncle's face; but if any one on the railway bank had seen him they would have thought the poor young gentleman was going into convulsions, such were his efforts to suppress his merriment. But it was in vain; and out at last his amusement burst in extraordinary snorts and blurts, ending at last in a hearty explosion of loud laughter. Mr. Hunnybun poked him with his stick, saying "If you must laugh at your uncle's take-in, do it openly, my boy! Don't be afraid! Give it way, or you may break a blood-vessel, and we may want a doctor where there is not one to be had; besides it is very expensive mending damaged boys!"

"Excuse me, uncle," said Augustus, now joined by his sister, who had been laughing into her handkerchief till she was crying quite as much: "excuse me uncle," said the young man, "but it really is so rich, so very English;" and off he went again, Mr. and Mrs. Hunnybun and the children all joining. "Truly, uncle," said Augustus, first recovering himself, "did you say that he was English *bone* and muscle!"

"Hang the fellow!" said Mr. Hunnybun: "with his *Pisar* and his *Veeniss* one might have known that he was a cockney; but who the deuce could imagine a man travelling from Whitechapel all over the world collecting bones!"

"Oh, no doubt," said Augustus, "these farmers manure their fields with the bones of half the heroes of Europe. Alexander's dust went to stop a beer-barrel; why not Moreau's and Lannes' go to feed a turnip or a goodly beet-root?"

"Might I have that card?" said the young farmer, eagerly. "I wish I had known that he was a bone-merchant; I buy tons of bones every year, and I might have picked up something useful out of him."

Mr. Hunnybun handed him the card, which the other slipped into his waistcoat-pocket. The train again stopped, and the young farmer left the carriage.

This adventure furnished joke and laughter till the party found themselves approaching the Humber. "Three o'clock is the time of arrival by the time-table," said Mr. Hunnybun, "and here we are to a minute," he added, exhibiting his watch. "Capital line! admirable travelling! true Eng——"—he would have added, English travelling; but the bone-merchant stuck in his throat, and he merely subjoined, "True to a second! capital line."

Our party were steaming across the Humber: Mr. Hunnybun protested that he thought he was arriving at Ostend instead of an English sea-port—he was going to say, but the bone-merchant flashed on him, and he merely said Hull. Mrs. Hunnybun acquiesced in the likeness.

On taking their seats at the Hull station, they found sitting in a corner, not another Whitechapel traveller, but a tall young man, in grey paletot, and brown wide-awake, of a very intelligent and pleasing appearance. He was in fact handsome, and certainly well-bred. Mr. Hunnybun said to himself, "Very English!" but he did not articulate it. The gentleman was reading the Times, but the Bradshaw's Guide of the Hunnybuns being missing, he very politely offered his, at the same time opening the map to show the places through which the line passed. Conversation commenced and became very sociable, and it was soon evident that the beauty of Miss Hunnybun was not without its effect on the young man. He made himself very agreeable, and as he knew every place right and left, told them all about the proprietors, and the historic events which had occurred there, as well as how the crops were, what were the rents, and such matters.

By the time they reached Filey they were the best friends imaginable. The stranger regretted extremely that he was going on to Scarborough; and they parted at the Filey Station, with many wishes of soon meeting again.

"For the Royal Hotel?" "For Foord's Hotel, sir?" asked a lot of eager fellows with cards in their hands.

"For the very best hotel in the place," said Mr. Hunnybun.

"Here you are, sir; very first hotel in the place," said half-a-dozen different voices at once.

"Omnibus, sir, will take you and your luggage to the first hotel, sir."

Mr. Hunnybun motioned to his party to get into the omnibus, and soon all the packages were piled on it, while Augustus ran to get the shaggy Skye-terrier, the walking door-mat, called "Clouds" because he came out of *Skye*, from his box; and away they all posted for Filey.

"Now for a rural spot!" said Mr. Hunnybun, rubbing his hands as if in expectation of unusual enjoyment: "my friend Potts, who was here some years ago, says it is the most rural of watering-places on all the north coast."

Involuntarily all turned their heads and gazed out of the window. "Rural!" exclaimed Angela: "why surely this cannot be the place!" They saw a flat plain without a tree, on which stood some great piles of buildings, large, upright, and somewhat chaotic, as if they were a part of a shabby London suburb, conveyed hither for the accommodation of Filey visitors. Nothing could look less rural. There were terraces of three-storied houses, quite of a town-fashion, ending as if other terraces were to connect them, with some general design as yet undeveloped to the stranger's eye. Terraces these, some with two or three stories inhabited, and all the rest staring vacantly out of their untenanted windows. They whirled past a great hotel, fit for Brighton or Cheltenham, but did not stop.

"What!" said Mr. Hunnybun; "is there another first-rate hotel?" They went round and round in the most extraordinary manner, flourishing about, now among buildings, and now among dusty lanes, till finally they drew up in the street of the little fishing-village at a commercial-looking inn.

"Where are we?" asked Mr. Hunnybun.

"And is this the best hotel?"

"The very best, sir; capital house; walk in, sir."

The Hunnybuns soon found themselves in a good upper room which looked out on the humble street, along which numbers of blue-garbed fishermen, and women evidently of their kinship, were passing to and fro. It was not very fashionable, nor very rural.

"That omnibus has brought us *from* the first-rate hotels, I fancy," said Mr. Hunnybun to the waiter.

"Very sorry, sir," replied the man, "but the house is full, all full, every corner of it; master himself has just given up his bed to a lady and gentleman with their

children, and goes out to sleep. But we will get you all good beds out, sir."

"*Out!*" repeated Mr. Hunnybun, "that won't do; we must be off and seek for lodgings."

"Filey is very full, sir," said the waiter; "people are at their wits' ends for lodgings: don't know, sir, where you'll find any."

The Hunnybun family stared aghast. They felt the desolation of a group of orphans. What a feeling that is of being houseless and homeless!

"Lord Lobster is going to-day from the Crescent, No 5," said a rather slatternly boy who came in with the dinner, addressing the waiter.

"Is he?" said the waiter, "then run you and say a family is coming to look at the lodgings: good lodgings, sir, those at No. 5," added he, addressing Mr. Hunnybun.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Hunnybun, evidently much relieved by the hope of having again a roof over his head.

The boy came back. All right! Lord Lobster was gone and the rooms at liberty, but might not be so in half an hour. Off went the Hunnybuns, led by the slatternly boy, and found a fine airy suite of rooms, giving a splendid view of the sea, and only five guineas a week. Five guineas! Why such lodgings could be had in London for half that price: but then Filey was so rural, and all the world was coming to it! Mr. Hunnybun closed the bargain, threw himself into an easy chair, and felt himself no longer a homeless man.

Lord Lobster was but that moment gone; and as it was still day-light, away went the Hunnybuns to take a survey of the celebrated bay; and truly it was glorious. Wide spread the waters of the sea glittering in the descending sun. To the right stretched the long line of chalk cliffs to the distant point of Flamborough Head, where the tower of the lighthouse and fleet of fishing-boats gleamed out white in the western light. Above these cliffs, especially above those nearer and bolder ones, the Speeton cliffs stretched away to the right; green uplands, destitute of trees, except where the dark woods of Hunmanby stood somewhat more inland. To the left a high point of land ran out far into the sea, forming the bay; and beyond it the celebrated

"Filey-bridge," a mass of savage rocks, appearing only above the water at low tide, ran out again far into the ocean. Then the white spray of the surf beating over those rocks might be seen tossed high in the air.

Below the admiring spectators, our Hunnybun friends, at the foot of the fine natural terrace on which they stood, stretched the firm, clean, solid sands, on which the incoming tide was rolling solemnly, and scores of gay people were walking or riding to and fro; some pacing quietly along in well-dressed groups, others in the loose deshabille quite allowable for the sea-side. There were nurses with troops of handsomely-dressed children, armed with wooden spades, and cavalcades of young ladies and gentlemen cantering on the level sands that stretched for miles. On the water lay a whole fleet of fishing-boats; some of them were already departing for the night's fishing; and the wreck of a collier close to the shore gave to the animated scene a touch of the picturesque.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun, "I don't find much rurality here; but this is a grand sight. We shall like it, I think; eh, my dears?"

"Oh, immensely!" exclaimed the party. Augustus was on fire to have Angela galloping with him over these famous sands. Quintus and Mira were seized with a sudden desire for wooden spades. Mrs. Hunnybun expressed her determination to indulge her passion for fish, by trying every scaly creature that came into port; and down they went through the winding paths and young plantations, furnished with seats, where the sea prospect and the sea breezes might be enjoyed; and forth they issued on the strand amongst the throng of visitors and walkers—of fishermen carrying cart-loads of nets to their boats, and others wheeling their boats to the water on the pairs of wheels prepared for the purpose, and dogs of all sorts and sizes, and the usual accompaniments of cods'-heads and dog-fish, giving their character to the sands.

At nine o'clock the Hunnybuns returned delighted to the inn, solacing their imagination with a delicious tea, and then "flitting" to their lodgings. But mortal hopes are still fallacious: the room which they had left empty, except of wine-glasses and the waiter, was now occupied with a



The Flushing at the End Side.



jolly crowd of "trippers"—thanks to the railways for a new term—who were enjoying a supper like a dinner, with glasses of foaming "Timothy," and the projection of pipes and port after it.

The Hunnybuns blessed their stars that they had a roof awaiting them, and trudged off with a truck laden with portmanteaus, band-boxes, carpet bags, great-coats and cloaks, and in ten minutes were at home in their pleasant rooms on the cliff, the tea-urn steaming on the table, and a thousand plans of the morrow's pleasure and excursions in their heads; and so, goodnight!

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE HUNNYBUNS ENJOY THEMSELVES ; AND WHAT HAPPENED TO
MR. HUNNYBUN AT THE EMPEROR'S BATH.

A SPLENDID morning greeted the Hunnybun family. As they gazed out of their windows, the sun was flashing on the living waters of the bay ; numbers of fishing-boats, with tawny sails, were resting like sea-butterflies on the waves, and already the bathing-machines were in operation, carrying the bathers out into the snowy surge ; fishermen, who had brought in their cargoes in the early morning, were spreading their nets to dry on the green slopes between the cliff and the shore.

After a refreshing bathe, our friends proceeded to explore the neighbourhood. The high promontory between the open sea and the bay, and the distant bridge where the white spray was still leaping, attracted them most strongly. Thitherward they bent their course. The children ran along the edge of the waters that discharged their billows on the solid smooth sands like regular cannon-shot, or, curling along at a rapid rate, resembled a running fire of musketry. It was difficult to prevent Quintus and Mira from rushing into the water, as it spread itself, with each dissolving wave, over the sands ; old Clouds barking vociferously, as if he recognised his old acquaintance, the sea, as it had been familiar to his canine youth in the Isle of Skye. Now, the children were calling in clamorous exultation at the discovery of little crabs left amongst the fucus-covered rocks, and now wondering at some odd fish left on the beach.

Anon the party approached the cliffs, which at the bottom consisted of a rude stratum of sand-stone, on which were piled mountains of earth which the sea in tempests and the rain from above had scored and scooped out with spires and pinnacles, precisely as Banvard's panorama shows on the

banks of the Missouri. At their feet lay huge masses which the waters continually bring down, and which the waves are continually assailing and dissolving.

A foot-path leading over the hill led them to the top of the promontory covered with the finest green sward, and giving a view of the open ocean. To the right lay distant Flambro' Head; to the left Scarborough, with its castle on its bold lofty headland, and the mass of red-tiled houses lying clear as if only some half-mile distant. But on the sunny sea vast numbers of vessels stretched from horizon to horizon,—all in fact traversing that great marine highway from Scotland to London which is perpetually crowded with a nation's traffic: merchant vessels; whole fleets of colliers bearing coals from Newcastle to the metropolis, or returning for more; steamers bravely bearing onwards, and leaving their long lines of smoke behind them; with the white sails of almost myriads of those butterflies of the ocean, fishing cobbles, gleaming bright and snowy on all parts, near and remote, of the ocean plain.

But great as was this view, the one directly under them was not less impressive. There the sea was raging against the rocks which rose to a considerable altitude. North and south extended the jagged and indented line of precipitous cliffs, rent and ravaged by the storms of ages. A narrow neck of land ran out just before them, to which they advanced, and stood aloft, as it were, in the centre of this really sublime scene. On one hand the sea was boiling and sweeping in milky whiteness through a great cavern; on the other hand rushing like an assailing army into a circular abyss, which it had worn in the precipitous cliffs, and leaping all foam on the huge ledges of projecting rocks, and plunging back in fury into the boiling deep. The whole mass of waters was in a motion like some vast and restless living thing, swelling, eddying, and moaning with a wild melancholy, or thundering as with a thousand cannon on the dark yellow walls of cavernous rock.

All felt the grandeur of the scene in silence. Northward stretched headland after headland to near Whitby. The gulls soared midway between them and the surface of the sea, with their wild cries, and vessels descried only by the glass

showed far eastward, telling of the distant shore of Denmark, towards which they were probably bound.

"Splendid!" said Mr. Hunnybun, first breaking the silence; "I did not suspect anything so magnificent here. Potts was right: *this* is what I dare say he called *rural*. Well, it is worth coming all this way to see."

Again leaving the heights they proceeded along the shore to the so-called bridge, which no less excited their wonder.

It was a long stretch of rocks, against which the great ocean to the left had been smiting its thundering billows and tossing the spray. Ledge below ledge descended on that side over which the green waters came foaming and foaming, and on the right the rocks shelved down into the quiet bay, amid masses of huge stones covered with sea-weeds. The solid rock over which they walked was worn and honeycombed by the action of the sea, and in every hole was a crimson sea-anemone. Anon they came to a chaos of vast stones which had been hurled one upon another by the giant might of the tempestuous ocean; and having clambered over, they found themselves amid a wild scene of tossing and resounding waters and desolate crags, which would have reminded them of scenes in the Western Isles, if they had ever been there. Then wild-looking fishermen were hunting crabs among the stones, gentlemen were fishing, and often pulling out such fish as excited the piscatory propensities of Augustus, and ladies, followed by men with hammers and baskets, were collecting specimens of rocks and sea-weed.

"Capital idea," thought Mr. Hunnybun, as he saw the hammers: "I will have one, and geologize; this is just the spot for it." They turned back, and went behind the rocks, passing sundry pleasant nooks of rock where young ladies were seated with their crochet-work and even embroidery, and looking as though they were very industrious indeed, having one eye employed on the sublime and the other on the needle.

Down they went from one huge ledge to another beneath frowning crags, and with the ocean roaring below them as if it were eager to swallow them up—so, at least, it seemed to the Hunnybuns. Anon they came to a grand amphि-

theatre in the rocks, which had been hewn out by the waves of centuries. In front, the sea boiled vehemently, and flung its foaming waters on the high ledges of the crags into the hollow of this semicircular space, till they accumulated into a great pool which some one had denominated the “Emperor’s Bath.”

At this moment, Mr. Hunnybun’s attention was caught by the words of a stout gentleman with a brown wide-awake, and a Scotch plaid on his shoulders, who was pointing out to those about him a fossil tree embedded in the rock. “Capital!” thought Mr. Hunnybun to himself; “fine subject for my hammer.” At the same moment Angela’s countenance brightened, and the tall gentleman in the grey coat, who had travelled with them from Hull, stood before them, evidently greatly delighted at thus meeting with her.

Mr. Lockwood, as a friend who was with him called him, was come over from Scarborough for a day’s stroll about Filey. There was a deal of beauty in its shores, he said, his eyes being fixed on Angela’s face at the moment. It was singular, perhaps, that Angela should blush because there were beauties at Filey; but so she did, and looked very intently at the fossil tree.

Mr. Lockwood, who had the power of making himself agreeable to all the Hunnybuns, was invited to lunch with them. They retraced their steps towards the village,—Mr. Hunnybun facetiously observing that if the surge was as creamy as it looked, he should certainly have a fine supply of sea-butter by the time he reached home, as he felt it churning in his boots.

That day, after luncheon, Angela made the discovery that she had forgotten her riding-hat; and Augustus declared that she must have a black felt hat with a short feather—nothing was so becoming to a lady: and being assured by Mr. Lockwood that the shops were excellent in Scarborough, the brother and sister, accompanied by that gentleman, set off at once to make the purchase, and for other important objects. They returned enraptured with Scarborough. Such a picturesque locality! such a lively little town, such capital shops! as Mr. Lockwood had said. Such crowds of gay people, and such horses and carriages for traversing the

strand and the neighbourhood. They were impatient for their uncle and aunt to remove immediately.

Mr. Hunnybun begged them to consider, however, that they had taken the lodgings for a week, and that he was going to geologize the cliff and bridge. He had been already making observations with his pocket-compass on the headland, and was convinced that he had discovered a most valuable iron-mine. Besides, he had found that though Filey had ceased to be rural, it was become exceedingly aristocratic. The nobility fought shy of Scarborough, now that "tripping" had come into vogue from the manufacturing towns. Did they know that there were some dozens of nobility there, besides dignified clergy, and even the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

All this made a suitable impression on the minds of Augustus and Angela, although Mr. Hunnybun assured them that they were expected to pay something for the honour. He said that he himself had had to wait that morning for an hour before he could get one of the six bathing machines; for when he was going to step into one, he was told that it was already engaged by my Lady Seacrab : of course he immediately gave precedence to so distinguished a personage, and expressed his willingness to wait for the next vacancy; but the Marchioness of Mackrell was about to take her plunge, and the next unoccupied machine would be required for her son, the young Lord Prawn, who, attended by his valet, was already in sight on the sands. No way daunted, Mr. Hunnybun waited patiently, and was then told he must yield his turn to the Honourable Misses Whiting, who were seen driving up in a pony chaise. "At this," said Mr. Hunnybun, "I quite lost my patience; and planting myself firmly on the steps of the empty machine, declared that if the Duke of Devildom or the Baroness Beelzebub were coming to bathe, I would have my turn: at which the bathing-woman, the fine servants, and loungers all round, set me down for a wicked and most irate old fellow."

Mrs. Hunnybun felt quite shocked at her husband's confession: but it was no use speaking to him when his blood was once up: so they got their supper. They had all most

astounding appetites, and prepared for a gay day on the morrow.

The morrow arose. After breakfast the horses appeared at the door for Augustus and Angela's ride; Augustus, in a coat of the latest fashion, Oxonian, Albert, or whatever it might be called, and a russet-coloured felt hat, and Angela in her handsome habit, the new black hat and its little feather and smart blue veil, made a gallant appearance, and so cantered off. At the end of the village they most singularly again encountered Mr. Lockwood, also on horseback, who declared that so great was his admiration of the beauties of Filey, that he could not resist another day's pleasure there. How he happened to be there so early, and on horseback too, we cannot explain. It was, no doubt, one of those wonderful coincidences that fall out in this world. All we know is that the three in great gaiety of spirit cantered along the green lane towards the wooded uplands of Hunmanby, the abode of the gallant Admiral Mitford.

While they were enjoying themselves in that direction, Mr. Hunnybun, with his hammer in his hand, a large pouch slung by his side, and his compass in his pocket, set forth for a geological and exploratory ramble towards the foreland and bridge, leaving Mrs. Hunnybun to amuse herself by sitting on the airy seats in the plantation, to pick up acquaintance with elderly ladies, and to watch the digging and delving operations of the children on the sands below.

The weather was bright and warm: the young people came home all jollity, and full of talk of the finely wooded old place of Hunmanby, which formerly belonged to Mr. Osbaldiston, and still looked, with its huge stable-yards and paddocks hemmed in by thick tall hedges, like an old haunt of the sportsman and lover of the turf. The children were equally full of their canals and pits, and lakes and watery mazes, which they had been constructing to their great delight, and which, to their still greater delight, they had seen the advancing tide level and sweep away;—but no Mr. Hunnybun presented himself at luncheon.

“Where can he be?” exclaimed Angela.

“Your uncle,” said Mrs. Hunnybun, very quietly, “desired us not to wait for him, or to trouble ourselves about

him, as he meant to ramble along at his leisure, and look about him to his heart's content."

At five o'clock, when, after another ride, the young people returned home, they found Mrs. Hunnybun in a great consternation: Mr. Hunnybun had not returned. She had taken a carriage and driven out with the children, hoping to meet with her husband by the way, and bring him back with her to dinner. But she neither met with him, nor found him at home; and as she was of a very anxious turn of mind, that easily took alarm; and conjured up the most direful apparitions of sudden death and frightful accident, she hurried out over the heights towards the spa, and down the heights towards the bridge, as far as she could go for the tide, which was now high, eagerly inquiring from every one whether they had seen a short stout gentleman answering to Mr. Hunnybun's description. But no one could give information, and the anxiety of the good lady increased proportionately.

The children ran hither and thither. On the high green foreland they met an old coast-guard, who had seen their grandfather.

Mrs. Hunnybun hurried forward, and the man came solemnly to meet her.

"You have seen Mr. Hunnybun, have you, my good man?" asked she.

"Yes, ma'am; I saw a stout old gentleman about noon on the hill there, with a hammer and a heavy bag of stones. Was he a little — ?" said the man, significantly, and touched his head.

"A little what?" asked Mrs. Hunnybun, half-comprehending his meaning, and offended by it. "A little what?"

"Oh, no offence, ma'am," said the grave man with his spying-glass in his hand. "I only thought he might have a screw loose, and was apt to wander away."

"Wandered away!" repeated Mrs. Hunnybun, a horrible idea of sudden insanity having seized on her husband now suggesting itself. "Wandered away! What can make you think of such a thing?"

"Well," said the man, "only because the old gentleman called me to him, and told me he had made a discovery which

would be the making of Filey. He appeared very serious about it, and stared at a little pocket-compass which he had in his hand. When I asked him what it was, he said it was an iron mine on the very spot where we stood."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Hunnybun; "he was talking of an iron mine before he went out."

"He said," continued the man, "that he was sure there was an iron mine, which was immensely rich, in this hill; 'for look,' said he, pointing to the pocket-compass in his hand, 'the needle varies. There stands your church, due east and west; see how the needle varies to the east.' I looked, and it really was so; but as I never heard that there was iron in this hill, I said he had better try it a good way off. We went a good way off; but the needle did just the same. 'There it is,' said the old gentleman, 'this hill is a mass of iron-stone; it will be worth millions of money. The hill is full of iron; it lies in lumps like houses!' Just be so good as to lend me the compass a minute, says I to the old gentleman; and when it was in my hand, it was true as steel. 'That's wonderful,' says the old gentleman; 'what can it mean?' It seems, says I, that you have a steel snuff-box, or something of that sort about you. 'Nothing of that sort,' says the old gentleman; 'nothing of that sort, I assure you;' and with that he clapped his hands on his sides, and then thrust them into his trowsers' pockets, and out he pulled a big bunch of keys. 'Lord bless me!' he exclaimed, 'that's it. What a fool I must be!' And with that he fell a laughing."

The old guard-man laughed at the recollection, and then added, "And after that he went down to the shore to look after what he called 'fossil cheeses.'"

"Fossil cheeses!" repeated Mrs. Hunnybun, half offended at the man's manner; "fossil tree, you mean. I know that my husband is interested about the fossil tree: no doubt he is there; no doubt he is below the rocks!"

"Impossible, ma'am," said the man. "When the tide is up there is no footing there."

"He may have forgotten himself," said Mrs. Hunnybun, in alarm; "he may be drowned. Oh, good heavens!"

He does forget himself, then, thought the man, who never lost the idea of Mr. Hunnybun having a screw loose;

and then, being touched by the evident anxiety of Mrs. Hunnybun, added, "But he may have rambled along the cliff, past the spa, and so back by the fields, ma'am. You'll most likely find him already at home. I'll go over the cliff, ma'am, and down the shore, and make inquiries."

Mrs. Hunnybun thanked him, promised him a handsome reward, and giving him their address, hastened home, hoping to find her husband; but he was not there. And now came Augustus and Angela, and great was the consternation which their aunt's information caused. Away went Augustus; nor would Angela be kept back. Without stopping to change her riding-dress, but merely gathering her long skirts about her, she anxiously followed her brother; and, while terrified at his rashness, followed him from one airy height to another, listening eagerly for some reply to his shouts. There was no reply, except from the booming waves and the screaming gulls. The wind had risen strongly, and the sea dashed with tremendous force against the crags.

The anxiety of the young people became intense. Augustus shouted his uncle's name. At length—could it be?—he thought he heard a faint reply. He called again: he was certain he heard an answering voice. It was down amid the thunder of the winds and waves. He sprang down the steep and crumbling descent, Angela crying after him to come back, or he would be dashed to pieces. Downward, however, he sprang, until he was seen traversing a wild projection of loose crags, that, shattered by tempests, and dislocated by the frosts of last winter, stood like a tower above the ocean.

Here Augustus paused for a moment, and a voice reached him from below, crying "Help, help, for God's sake!" He knew it was his uncle, and he shouted back with all his might, "Coming, uncle, coming."

How he was to get down there, however, was not so clear; he therefore once more sprang upward, and, declaring what he had seen and heard, asked from several people who were now assembled at this point what was to be done? There was nothing to be done, they said: there was no getting him up there, nor was there much danger where he was, as the water, except in spring-tides, did not fill the cave more than mid-leg deep. In two hours the water would be low

enough for him to get round by the shore. "Two hours!" exclaimed Augustus: "the very terror would kill him. We must have ropes, and pull him up."

Angela, half wild with terror, repeated her brother's words; and a handsome reward was now offered to all who aided in placing the old gentleman safely on the hill. The idea of reward gave energy to every frame; ropes were soon brought, and three or four stout fellows went down with Augustus on the rock, hallooing with voices that seemed to drive through the very din of winds and waves, and were speedily answered by the fluttering of a white flag from below.

"Poor old gentleman! he is there sure enough," said they; and they bawled another cheer to him stentoriously. Augustus proposed, as he was light and nimble, that they should put a rope round him and let him down. This was done; and he sprang from crag to crag with the agility of a wild chamois. Presently, he came low enough to descry the lower part of the cave, and saw at once that it was the Emperor's. There stood his uncle, looking very pale and excited, with his handkerchief tied to the end of his stick, and still waving it frantically. The water had risen far higher than he expected, and now filled three-fourths of the cave. Mr. Hunnybun had climbed to a chaos of recently precipitated masses, close to the pile where Augustus stood. "Bravo, uncle!" said Augustus. "Courage! there's plenty of help: we will have you up in a few minutes."

"God be praised!" groaned Mr. Hunnybun *de profundis*. Augustus was speedily down with him, the old man clutching him and clasping him in his arms, as if he were actually in the agony of drowning. For three hours had he been confined in that terrible hollow of the rocks; the sea every minute coming nearer and nearer, and growling and hissing, and leaping ravenously and with a terrible din towards him, as if it were determined to have him and sweep him into its raging depths.

Augustus soon had the rope safe round his bulky person; and pointing out to him how easily he might lay hold on certain stones, and set his feet on certain ledges, they shouted amain, and the rope began to draw tight. But it

was a desperate undertaking for poor Mr. Hunnybun ; and nothing but the terrors of the sea below could compel him to encounter the terrors of the steep and shattered rocks above. Mr. Hunnybun was no trifling weight, and for these forty years had been accustomed to climb nothing more difficult than a staircase, well carpeted, and supported by a good mahogany handrail. Here it was a different matter. The rocks were almost perpendicular ; and what was worse, they were loose ; and as the old gentleman took hold of one, it toppled down headlong, and dashed down into the foaming churning sea. Mr. Hunnybun groaned, and would have toppled down after it, but for the rope and the stout pullers above, whose voices, now chiming in chorus, cheered loudly ; while Augustus pushed behind, and encouraged the old gentleman with his voice. But spite of all this, Mr. Hunnybun's courage and strength seemed going ; his legs trembled violently ; his hands convulsively clutched the rocks ; another moment and he would have swung loose, and his ponderous weight, overpowering the men above, or cutting the rope on the sharp edge of the rock, he would have gone down to the furious element below. But at that moment a young active form came down the rock, and, like a mountain-goat, flung a strong arm round Mr. Hunnybun, singing out to the fellows above to hawl away ; and up he went as if by magic. It was Mr. Walter Lockwood. The most fortunate chance had brought him again to the Hunnybuns, and this time to the rescue. Augustus followed like a squirrel ; and in an amazingly short space of time they all stood on the platform of rocks safe and sound. As regards the standing, however, we must except Mr. Hunnybun himself, who had fainted, and lay prostrate on the rocky floor ; but he was safe : Angela saw *that* from the green height above where she stood, and saw also who was the brave and strong helper in need. And now the brawny fellows who had pulled at the rope, taking the old gentleman in their arms, carried him up the slope, and laid him on the green sward as on a bed.

Angela, without stopping to express her gratitude to Lockwood, flung herself on her knees by her uncle, fearing that he was dead ; but he very soon recovered in the fresh breezy air, and then, thanking God in the first place for his

deliverance, in the second, he seized a hand of each of the young men, and, without speaking, gave them such an energetic gripe, as left no doubt in their minds as to his undiminished vitality. His story was soon told: he had been hammering away, first at the fossil tree, and then at the hard round stones embedded here and there in the sand-stone, and which, in his geological ignorance, he had mistaken for fossil Dutch cheeses; when, to his horror, he perceived that the tide was now so high as to cut off all escape. Of his terror and agitation some idea may be formed, especially as those desperate waves came higher and higher, and he was in no state of such calmness as to calculate *how* high they would rise: one thing he clearly saw, no boat could approach the surf to bring him off.

For three mortal hours he had seen them advancing, and had exhausted all the power of shouting and frantic waving of his handkerchief, to make some one hear or see. His bag was well loaded with stones, including a great piece of the fossil tree; but, on reaching the other side of the cliff, he flung his bag and his hammer, together with his new "Geologist's Vade Mecum," into the sea, vowing henceforth eternal renunciation of all geological researches.

Joyful was his welcome home; nor did home ever seem so sweet to him before. Welcome, too, was Walter Lockwood. The old gentleman, and good Mrs. Hunnybun, with tears in her eyes, shook him by the hand over and over again; and, of course, there was nothing for it but he must stay and dine with them.

CHAPTER III.

MR. HUNNYBUN HAVING DONE WITH PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE, HAS
A VARIETY OF ADVENTURES.

MR. HUNNYBUN had done with philosophy : he determined to be "merry and wise," as the easiest way of wisdom. He walked about, therefore, with his grand-children on the shore, full of joke and playfulness ; assisted them in making mounds and canals in the sands, and building towers with feathers stuck in the top by way of flags ; and enjoying as much as they did seeing the great sea come up and assault them, and lay them waste. He asked little boys and girls whether they were married, much to their astonishment, and the amusement of Quintus and Mira, who saw the blank looks, especially of one little fellow of about ten, who said simply "No, he was not married ; but his mother and father were." Mr. Hunnybun no less amused his grand-children by answering a group of little children who asked him what o'clock it was, that he did not carry a clock about with him ; he could only tell them what o'watch it was, which would perhaps do till they got home.

Our jolly old friend, by these means, got precisely the same character that he had got before amongst the coast-guard : "The funny old gentleman who was rather queer."

In his walks in quest of his friend Potts' ruralities, Mr. Hunnybun found himself at the stile, leading into a green field, where a bull was standing, looking very serious. Not choosing to dispute the passage with so formidable a character, Mr. Hunnybun went round to the gate, and into the next field ; but here finding himself considerably bewildered, he was about to retrace his steps, when in the grass he saw a girl on her hands and knees, as if grazing. Approaching to learn farther of this phenomenon, he found, to his surprise, a slender young tramping girl of apparently sixteen, with a quantity of cheap periodicals lying around

her, and herself deep in the study of one of them. Near to her also lay a basket of cotton-balls and tapes, and such small merchandise.

"What," said Mr. Hunnybun, amazed at this march of education, "do you people read?"

The girl looked up, startled from her eager perusal of the interesting sheet, and showing a shrewd face and pair of clear grey eyes, half shut, as if overpowered by the sunshine, said, "Yes, sir; why not?"

"Oh! I don't know why not," said Mr. Hunnybun; "I only wonder what school you can go to."

"My father taught me, sir," said the girl. "He's a Scotchman, and a good scholar; and he teaches me at night at the lodging-houses."

"He does!" said Mr. Hunnybun; "but where is he?"

"He is calling," said the girl.

"Calling—how calling?"

"Going round to the houses in Filey yonder."

"Oh," said Mr. Hunnybun, "and your father begs while you read love-stories?"

"Only just once in a while," said the girl. "I only just gave him the slip a few minutes, to finish a very interesting tale."

"Lord bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun; "and so beggars read: and you can read, and still beg?"

"Why, yes, sir; but somehow I've got such romantic notions into my head, I think I should be better without reading."

"Romantic notions! What sort of romantic notions?"

"Oh,—why, if I were a young man I should like to be a pirate, or something of that sort."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun; "what do you read?"

"The Family Herald, and Reynolds's Miscellany, and such like," replied she, holding up a mass of dirty papers, with dingy woodcuts, towards him.

"Why, sir," said the girl, stroking old Clouds, who seemed to take greatly to her, "I like the life well enough; we see the country, and have adventures—if we could always be sure of enough to pay our lodgings. That's the bore, sir; that's the thing that troubles us."

"That troubles you," said Mr. Hunnybun, handing her sixpence.

"Thank you, sir," said the girl, springing to her feet.
"Ay, sir, that spoils all the romance."

"Romance!" repeated Mr. Hunnybun. "Good gracious! what do you call romance. But Lord bless me, how that dog seems to take to you. How is it?"

"Oh, sir," said the girl, "it's only a knack we have. I can 'tice any dog."

"You can!" said Mr. Hunnybun. "But mind you don't 'tice *that* dog; mind *that*, I say."

"Not for the world, sir. I'm not an ungrateful wretch, sir," continued she, still patting old Clouds' head.

"But what can be done for you?" said Mr. Hunnybun, as if half speaking to himself. "Would not you like to leave this vagabond life? Suppose you were educated for a lady's maid, or so; you could still travel."

"Yes, sir," said the girl; "but who would educate such a girl as me?"

"We must see; we really must," said Mr. Hunnybun.
"You'll be about Filey for a day or two?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, in the meantime," added he, "you must burn all your trashy novels, and read what is good and sound. There," said he, tearing a leaf out of his pocket memorandum-book, and writing something on it; "take that to No. 5 in the Crescent, and they'll give you some really good publications, and let me see you to-morrow."

"Yes, sir; and God bless you, sir!" said the girl, taking the paper with a deep curtsey; and Mr. Hunnybun went on his way, pondering on his scheme of benefit for this clever but wild offshoot of humanity—this nursling of the highways.

"You gave that roll of Household Words, Chambers' Journal, and Ladies' Companion, to that poor girl?" said Mr. Hunnybun, at dinner.

"Yes," said Mrs. Hunnybun; "but why did you give them to that young tramp?"

"And your top-coat, sir," added the maid.

"My top-coat!" exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun, starting as if a gun had gone off at his ear.

"And your silk umbrella, sir," continued she.

"My capital new silk umbrella, for which I paid a pound when I left London!" exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun. "She had nothing to do with them; I never spoke of them."

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Hunnybun; "you must have done so. The young huzzy said you were afraid of the rain."

"My new top-coat! my new silk umbrella!" again ejaculated Mr. Hunnybun, as though an abyss of wonder had opened at his feet. "But how could you give them to a beggar-wench without a written order from me?"

"But there was your order, my dear," said Mrs. Hunnybun, rising, and handing him the piece of paper which he had brought. On one side of the paper stood the order concerning the papers, and on the other, in Mr. Hunnybun's own undeniable hand-writing, "also a top-coat, and silk umbrella."

Mr. Hunnybun, after a pause of blank astonishment, struck his forehead a hard slap with his open palm, and said slowly, "I see. I made that memorandum just before I left London, that I might remember to get these things. The artful witch." Mr. Hunnybun then related the whole story of the literary beggar-girl, and vowed he would hunt her out, and prosecute her.

"You may *hunt* her, uncle," said Augustus; "but *catching* her—that's another thing."

After dinner, Mr. Hunnybun sallied forth, taking all the young people with him; they traversed all the streets of Filey, and made inquiries every where; but to no purpose. The next morning Mr. Hunnybun rose up early to bathe, and called Clouds to attend him, for Clouds and his master were inseparable—but no Clouds was to be found. Where could he be? He had lain, as usual, under Mr. Hunnybun's bed, and the maid had seen him walking in the garden soon after she was up; and when, as usual, he had been sent down stairs by Mr. Hunnybun, to take his morning walk; but now he was nowhere to be seen.

"That young tramping baggage has got him, sir, you may depend upon it," said the maid. "That sort of cattle, sir, have a knack of 'ticing away dogs. It's dangerous to have anything to do with them."

Mr. Hunnybun knew she was right. "The wretch! the gipsy! the Jezebel!" exclaimed he; "but I'll pursue her;" and so saying he rushed out of the house with angry indignation. Mrs. Hunnybun, Angela, Augustus, Quintus, and Mira, all were full of trouble and vexation about the loss of old Clouds. Clouds, why he was one of the family—slept in their bed-room, put his nose on everybody's feet that was set on the fender. Old Clouds gone! Never was there such a lamentation. Mr. Hunnybun dispatched Augustus to Scarborough, to get placards printed, offering five pounds reward for the discovery of the thief. This done, in no placid mood, he descended to the shore to bathe, for he was a most indefatigable bather. As he went he looked on all sides, hoping still to see old Clouds somewhere.

Of the six bathing-machines, four were already out in the water, and Mr. Hunnybun, in a state of absence of mind, foaming at the villany of the romantic beggar-girl, and grieving over old Clouds, mechanically ascended the steps of the first of the two outstanding machines. The door obeyed his hand, and he was just stepping in, when a loud shriek startled him, and the door was banged back in his face. At the same moment loud cries saluted his ears from within; there was a wild running and screaming of the two bathing-women. Mr. Hunnybun, in confusion, stepped back, forgot where he was, and the next moment was lying on the sands.

"What does the gentleman mean? there's a lady in there!" screamed the amphibious attendants of the machine.

"Then why doesn't she hasp her door?" fiercely demanded Mr. Hunnybun, as he gathered himself up, covered with wet sand, and with his towel under his arm.

In an unlucky moment he had seen Mrs. Philiskirk, a buxom widow of apparently forty, whose acquaintance they had made in the Crescent, standing in the first act of disrobing. She had proceeded, however, no farther than to remove those rich and jetty locks which adorned her head, and which Mr. Hunnybun had so much admired, and which he said seemed to have defied the touch of time. Unlucky Mrs. Philiskirk! she had forgotten to hasp her door, and she was discovered standing with her splendid locks in her hand instead of on her head!

It was but a moment's glimpse, but it revealed a tale of years—a head of short grey hair and a face of fifty-five! The shock had caused Mr. Hunnybun to step backwards, and a heavy fall backwards, into the sand. Such was the effect upon his sensitiveness, that he never stopped till he reached the railway station and was on his way to Scarborough. Augustus was no little amazed to meet his uncle issuing from the Scarborough station towards the town, as he himself, having executed his commission, was about to leave it.

"Uncle!" exclaimed Augustus.

"Nephew!" replied Mr. Hunnybun, looking fluttered and stern. "I've done with Filey!" added he. "Tell them all at home to pack up, sacrifice the remainder of the week, and be here to-night; I'll have lodgings ready for them, and meet them here by the last train."

Augustus stood in astonishment. "What's amiss?" exclaimed he.

"What's amiss?" repeated he, sharply; "Where's Clouds? Is that not enough amiss?"

Mr. Hunnybun would not bear contradiction, hardly reason, when he was excited; therefore, Augustus, merely saying to himself "he is gone distracted about the dog!" rushed away at the sound of the bell to save the train.

Mr. Hunnybun hastened to the Esplanade, and in less than ten minutes had engaged handsome apartments in that elevated and fashionable terrace. Somewhat soothed by this, he descended to have a walk to the Castle, when, having crossed the lofty bridge which unites the new to the old port of Scarborough, he saw a sight that seemed to carry him out of himself. It was no other than old Clouds, struggling and howling most furiously to escape from under the arm of a man who was sitting on a low rail by the road-side among a number of other such men, and a variety of dogs for sale.

Clouds had seen his master and was frantic; his master had seen Clouds and was just as frantic. He rushed like a whirlwind on the man, crying, "Fellow, let go that dog!" at the same time giving the man a tremendous thwack on the shoulders with his walking-cane.

"What's that for?" said the man, grimly starting up and seizing Mr. Hunnybun by the collar. In a few minutes he

found himself in the midst of a very miscellaneous crowd of people, all thrusting their eager faces into the circle, and the fellow with the dog crying, "What's that for, old gentleman? What do you strike me for?"

"What for!" exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun, half choked with rage; "for stealing my dog, that's what it's for!"

"I steal your dog!" cried the fellow; "I don't steal dogs—I buy them. I bought him last night, didn't I Huggal? didn't I Walkshaw?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted these individuals, "Gave two guineas for him to an old blind beggar with a stiff arm."

"That's true," cried another. "The blind'un said the dog was given him by a gentleman, but he wouldn't learn to lead him."

"And his daughter led him," cried a third.

"What sort of a daughter?" demanded Mr. Hunnybun, somewhat pacified; old Clouds all this time plunging and whining about his knees. Three or four voices described with sufficient accuracy Mr. Hunnybun's romantic beggar-maid; and declaring himself convinced, he thrust three sovereigns into the man's hand, who looked at them for a second with considerable satisfaction, and then said, "But what's for the blow, sir?"

"For the blow? why," said Mr. Hunnybun, "bring that young slip of Satan's, that beggar-girl to me, and I'll give you five more!"

With this a wonderful discussion arose among the men, and Mr. Hunnybun marched off forthwith to a shop, and secured old Clouds by a collar and chain, in which he perambulated the streets at his side.

That evening, by the last train, Augustus and the grandchildren duly appeared; but no Mrs. Hunnybun or Angela. Mrs. Hunnybun declared it impossible to come till the morrow, as the week's clothes were with the laundress, and the packing could not be done; and only begged of Mr. Hunnybun not to take on so about Clouds.

Old Clouds was testifying that there was no need of that, by barking most vociferously all the way home before them.

The children were delighted with their new lodgings, and with Scarborough altogether. Mrs. Hunnybun and Angela arrived early in the evening of the next day. "But what

could possess you, my dear," said Mrs. Hunnybun, "to go off so abruptly ; there must be something in the air of Filey which turns people's heads, for, do you know, Mrs. Philiskirk went off yesterday without saying good-by to me, nor leaving word where she was going. If you had been young people, I don't know what I should have thought."

" You need not think I should ever run off with Mrs. Philiskirk," said Mr. Hunnybun, gruffly ; " I hope she has not come here."

" You do !" said Mrs. Hunnybun, staring at her husband. " Why, Hunnybun, she's a very nice woman, and I'm sure you've said so a hundred times."

" Not I !" said Mr. Hunnybun ; and his conscience smote him at the same moment. He felt that he was doing her wrong, and that he ought to confess his awful blunder and be laughed at ; but he could not.

" But there is Mrs. Philiskirk, I declare !" exclaimed Mrs. Hunnybun, as they were walking on the cliffs, the next evening. And there she was, sure enough, seated at her everlasting netting, at a window on the Esplanade, only three doors distant from their lodgings. All saw her, and Mrs. Hunnybun, saying she would go and call on her, turned towards the house : Mr. Hunnybun and the rest of the party walked homewards.

" Well, what *can* have possessed Mrs. Philiskirk ?" said Mrs. Hunnybun, coming in after them, with a face all wonder and vexation. " Do you know, she would not see me ! She sent word she was not at home. What *can* it mean ?"

" It means that she's a fool !" said Mr. Hunnybun, tartly ; and again his conscience gave him a desperate twinge. He knew he ought to confess and be laughed at. But he could not do it.

In the morning Mrs. Hunnybun determined once more to see Mrs. Philiskirk, and to know what the matter really was. Therefore, when her husband and the young people had walked out, she called again at Mrs. Philiskirk's lodgings, and was astonished to find she was gone.

" It's quite certain, ma'am," said the woman of the house, seeing Mrs. Hunnybun look rather incredulous ; " some-

thing struck the lady suddenly, she paid for the week, and then went off in a cab."

"But where to?" asked Mrs. Hunnybun.

"She did not say," replied the woman. "She seemed very much put out about something. She said she could not stay; and yet, but an hour before, had been praising the pleasantness of the apartments."

Mrs. Hunnybun returned home fuller of wonder than ever. "They've had a quarrel, my husband and she!" she said to herself; "they've affronted one another; it must be about politics, or the church. I should not wonder if Dr. Pusey is at the bottom of it."

All were amazed when Mrs. Hunnybun related the new flight of Mrs. Philiskirk; and Mr. Hunnybun, spite of his conscience, said, with a savage satisfaction, "Good riddance! I'm glad of it!"

"What could it be!" thought all the Hunnybuns.

Mr. Hunnybun once more felt himself at ease, and went about like a gay young man. But only a few days afterwards, Augustus, reading the list of arrivals, exclaimed, "Why, here is Mrs. Philiskirk, located at Musgrove House, just by the Castle!"

There indeed she was; and with her an end of all Mr. Hunnybun's satisfaction. He had been over the very door-stone of her lodgings, and might have met her. He had been wandering on the north shore, and might have seen her coming out of a bathing-machine. He felt like Dick Swiveller, that all the streets in Scarborough were closed to him, though he did not owe a penny in the place.

That was a wretched week to Mr. Hunnybun: he really contemplated flying the place, and that part of the country. He might meet Mrs. Philiskirk at any moment. But luckily Mrs. Philiskirk had seen him—had seen him pass to and fro to the castle—had seen him parading on the north cliff—and she was gone. Through a new acquaintance Mr. Hunnybun learned that Mrs. Philiskirk had quitted Scarborough in disgust, and had gone to Whitby; on which he thanked heaven, and vowed to himself never to set foot in that place.

Scarborough was now free to him. He strode down

towards the Spa Saloon, at the sound of Köhler's brass band, and suddenly, in a retired bend of the shrubby walks, coming on Walter Lockwood, reading to Angela, as she sat embroidering, accompanied by a young lady with whom she had become very intimate, he declared it was the pleasantest sight he had seen for many a day. The clouds had vanished from Mr. Hunnybun's sky. He was himself again.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HUNNYBUNS GO TO FLAMBOROUGH HEAD ; AND WHAT THEY SAW THERE.

THE Hunnybun family were enchanted with their new abode at Scarborough. Mr. Hunnybun, coming in to breakfast, from his usual walks in the shrubbery walks of the cliff, said he had met two old London friends, Bennington and Pennington. "Why," said he, "they come down here regularly every year. I used to wonder what could bring them so far north; but now I only wonder I never came with them. Look out!" he continued; "what a picture that is! There is the bay all scattered with fishing-vessels, and describing as exact a circle under the town as if struck out with a pair of compasses, or by Giotto himself. How gradually runs out that grey old castle-hill into the ocean, forming that side of the bay, and covered with its lofty though shattered keep, and the long old turretted barbican, into which the modern barracks is stuck, like a new barn into the heart of an old abbey! Look how the town, with its closely-built gabled houses, with their bright red roofs, lines all the sides of the bay, like a clear old Flemish picture. And then the little pier, and the quaint light-house at its southern point, complete the scene. See how the town has obviously grown from the little cluster of dwellings that formerly skulked for protection under the castle-hill and the castle—for protection from the north-east winds, and from enemies as savage in the old times. See how it has spread over the eminences all round, and sends up its busy smoke in the sun, showing what a mass of active human life there is in it. And how beautiful is the country round! When you look out from the harbour, or farther off in a boat on the water, I scarcely know any town on this side of Edinburgh that looks half so picturesque. The old town, with its ruddy houses, and masses of trees clothing the sloping bank down to the sea. Then that light and lofty bridge which spans the Dene, or what the Scotch would



A New View

call the glen, and unites the old town with the new one, whose terraces of white houses stand so well, with Oliver's Mount swelling away with its wooded crown above them, as if to match the heavy old castle ridge on the other side. Really it is very fine! And when you reach the north cliff, by the castle, see another bay there at your feet, and the bold coast sweeping away to Whitby, northward; and then turn and see the white cliffs of Flamborough Head, twenty miles off to the southward; you must say altogether that it is a very noble scene. But that, do you know, is a very small part of the charms of the neighbourhood. As you stand on the north cliff, you see, at the distance of a couple of miles or so from the coast, another set of heights and headlands raising themselves, and running on northward, the very facsimile of those on the actual shore. These are obviously the shores and cliffs of an older sea. They are the old sea-margins, as Mr. Robert Chambers calls them, in his very interesting work of that name; and when you set out to visit them, my friend Bennington says, you are surprised to see what glens go running up along the green fields, and what mounts stand up in the midst of them, where the tide formerly ran, and left the harder strata of sandstone still standing in islands. And when you approach the distant heights, before you arrive at the table-land, you are still more astonished at the beautiful valleys and airy downs, that, covered with grass and corn-fields, adorn the country. You may see the lofty woods that clothe the long and lofty sweeps of the old shores from these heights here; but Bennington tells me that we must drive up to Stepney, or Stüppeness, the old Scandinavian name for steep headland, the green hill you see westward, and then through the Forge valley, a fine romantic valley full of woods, where the monks formerly had iron-works, and so to Hackness, the splendid park of Sir John Vanden Bempd^e Johnstone. When you have seen that, my friend Bennington says, you'll know something of Scarborough, and its neighbourhood."

"But now, I suppose, we must explore the town a little."

All assented to this proposition gaily; and away they went to the walks below. They soon encountered, amongst throngs of gay people, not only Hunnybun's friends, Bennington and Pennington, but Mr. Walter Lockwood.

Thus suddenly swelled into a very considerable party, they descended those very pleasant winding walks, pausing at various benches and summer-houses to take a view of the town and harbour below.

"Some man of taste must have laid out these charming walks and shrubberies on this hill side," said Mr. Hunnybun.

"No doubt of it," replied Bennington; "I have heard that they were planned by the late Mr. Loudon."

The party descended to the Spa House, at the foot of the hill, looking like a little battlemented fort, with its broad terrace in front, with seats filled with gay people, and numbers of others watching the waves dash up against the wall that bounds it.

Herr Köhler's band was playing, and the sands below were covered with people walking and riding, while a whole line of boats were drawn up at the water's edge ready to take off parties for a row.

"It really is very lovely," said Angela.

"And what a good row of bathing-machines," said Hunnybun, whose mind was very much alive to that subject. "Do you know that I've been at the trouble of counting them. Filey has but *six* machines, and Scarborough has *eighty*,—that's the difference. Sixty on this south shore, and twenty on the north."

"I like the north shore best," said Pennington, "for bathing. It's more retired, and the people are very civil."

"So they are here," said Bennington; "I never was in a place where the people were so civil. The boatmen, the cabmen, the people who keep horses on the stand there by the Dene bridge, and who let out carriages and pony-chaises, with their smart red jacketed postilions, all are invariably civil and reasonable; and that makes one of the greatest pleasures of the place. They have no haggling nor trickery here."

"How delightful!" said Angela.

"It's quite true, I assure you," said Pennington. "But now," said he, "let's have a stroll into the lower part of the old town; it is curious."

The party, under the guidance of Pennington and Bennington, therefore, were soon penetrating into the lowest

purlieus of ancient Scarborough. Perhaps a more closely packed set of human habitations never was witnessed; streets wound along the hill sides and narrow passages: one graced with the name of "Long Greece," ran directly up them, in which old-fashioned houses stood closely face to face. But everywhere was the most wonderful cleanliness; all the houses, great and small, had brightly painted doors, and windows and shutters. The knockers and door-handles of brass were polished as bright as hands could make them, and the steps at the doors were all washed with yellow ochre. In almost every window, even of the poorest and most closely built houses, were pots of flowers, and the glimpses they got into the dwellings showed the floors neatly carpeted, and all as clean as without. Here and there were large and substantial houses, evidently occupied by substantial people, and some of the chief inhabitants of the place. Everywhere the streets and narrow passages were clean, and free from the repulsive odours which too commonly abound in densely built towns.

"What a wonderfully clean place!" exclaimed Mrs. Hunnybun: "I should like to engage a house-maid from Scarborough."

"And what a contrast to a Scotch sea-port, or even to such a place as North Shields!" exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun.

"That's the consequence of sanatory regulations, my dear sir," said Pennington, who was a great sanatory advocate. Perhaps no old borough has had so wise a municipal law as Scarborough, and that for ages. It is this; that any one may remove any dirt or manure, however valuable, found lying in the street, without asking any one's leave, and if every nuisance is not removed once a week, the keeper of the pavement shall present the house of him from whom such nuisance has arisen, and take surety for its removal under a suitable penalty. That's the law," said Mr. Pennington, "and it has become the habit."

"And an excellent habit," said Mr. Hunnybun.

Pennington and Bennington conducted them through this crowded place to the bakehouse of Mrs. Shaw, the celebrated bread and biscuit baker, where they found the stout and good-natured dame busy among the journeymen. Mr. Hunnybun was quite delighted to talk with this shrewd

woman of business, who assured him that, unlike the London bakers, her men were never worked of nights or on Sundays.

Thence they wandered on among scenes that seemed to carry them into a town of the middle ages. There were pipe-makers and rope-makers, and other handicraftsmen, carrying on their labours, as it were, in public, and numbers of French and Dutch sailors strolling to and fro in their picturesque red caps and wooden shoes.

The next morning, the same party being again together, the ringing of a bell suddenly caught their attention. ‘What’s that?’ inquired Mr. Hunnybun.

“It’s the steamer going to make a trip to Flamborough Head,” said Mr. Walter Lockwood. “It’s a fine day for a sail; why not go?”

“Ay, why not?” returned Mr. Hunnybun, with his usual impulsiveness; and the next moment the whole party were hurrying along towards the pier, to get on board; Walter Lockwood and Augustus having first suddenly disappeared up a side street, whence they returned, each armed with a double-barrelled gun, and equipped with a shot belt which they had hired at a gunsmith’s.

Presently they were all on board; and the neat little vessel steamed out of the harbour. The people on board were a perfect crowd, and the greatest part of them obviously of the humbler classes.

“What are these people?” asked Mr. Hunnybun.

“They are trippers,” said Bennington; “they came in with a cheap train yesterday from Leeds, and stay over to-morrow; they are people who but for the cheap excursion-trains would never see the sea in their lives, and, I assure you, they make the most of their trips. Fathers, mothers, and children come pouring in by thousands, loaded with boxes and baskets, and they seldom stop till they have got down to the water.”

“And *into* it,” interrupted Pennington; “which is better still.”

“Yes; *into* it,” continued Bennington. “They make the most of their time, even when a day’s trip only leaves them three or four hours in Scarborough; yet, in that time, they will get a dip into the sea, a row in a boat, a ride on donkeys

and horses, and even a drive in a chaise. They buy fish, and carry it away in their pocket-handkerchiefs to be cooked, and take whole loads of fish back with them. To-morrow are boat-races, and the walking of a greased pole over the water for a pig: and these people will all be here to see them: to-day they get a trip to Flamborough and Bridlington."

Mr. Hunnybun took prodigious interest in his new neighbours. There was a fiddle and a guitar on board, and all the "trippers" were evidently delighted with the music. One stout child of some four years of age, holding by its mother's gown, and hearing the first tweedle of the fiddle at the other end of the vessel, said, to Mr. Hunnybun's infinite delight,—

"Mother, what noise is that?"

"What noise, child?" said the mother.

"That noise like a chicken singing," said the child.

"Eh, John!" exclaimed another good wife to her husband: "What a power o' watter! Why, here's more watter than would turn all th' mills i' Pudsey."

But Bennington called the attention of the party to the noble view of the town and country beyond, as seen from the sea; and Augustus called their attention to three individuals, whom he declared to be the identical Brown, Jones, and Robinson, of *Punch*. There they were, all arrayed in shooting-jackets and shot-belts, and armed with double-barrelled guns. Brown wore a white wide-awake, Jones a black one, and Robinson a flat glazed sailor's hat, and a gold cannon, the length of his finger, and divers other enormous charms, at his watch-chain.

"They are going," said Walter Lockwood, "to make havoc among the myriads of sea-fowl that build on the cliffs of Flamborough Head in spring, but which have all flown from thence months ago. Our good stars grant that they don't shoot any of us!"

The sun shone brightly, the waves rolled pleasantly, and in a couple of hours they were off Flamborough Head. The Hunnybun party were quite enchanted. They had never seen Staffa, nor the Giant's Causeway; and were, therefore, pleased with lesser wonders, and the bold, lofty cliffs of Flamborough, all white as snow, and running out into the

green and heaving sea, in many strange shapes, hoary and ancient, and worn by the tides and tempests into most venerable aspects, struck them with admiration. Deep caves and ravines were scooped out between the perpendicular walls of chalk far into them. The projecting and lofty headlands were ploughed and scored by the ceaseless graver of time, through long ages. Huge caverns yawned at their feet, into which the sea was rushing with a hollow roar, and isolated masses of some two hundred feet high rose from the ocean, dazzlingly white in the sunshine.

Amongst these white and wild rocks appeared a narrow and very steep strand, on which was drawn up high above the tide a whole shoal of fishing-cobbles, presenting a singular picture to the eye. But already a boat was fast approaching the steamer, which was proceeding to Bridlington. Those world-wide words, "Ease her!" "Stop her!" resounded; and, anon, the Hunnybun party, and such other of the passengers as wished to remain at Flamborough, were safe in the boat; and, of course, among these, Brown, Jones, and Robinson, who were prepared for a desperate onslaught on the sea-fowl, which were nowhere to be seen.

"If you will see the caves," said the boatmen, "we must go at once, or the tide will be too high."

"Away to Robin Lythe's Hole," said Walter Lockwood; and the boatmen pulled away towards a not very large mouth of the cave, into which the tide was already pouring. Presently they drew near the foot of the precipitous cliffs, and entered between the great sea-walls.

"How awful!" said Angela.

"How grand!" said Augustus.

"But is it safe?" said Brown, Jones, and Robinson.

Mr. and Mrs. Hunnybun were silent, but looked at the boatmen inquiringly.

"Quite safe," said the boatmen, "if you hasten forward; the tide is a little too advanced, but, if you go quickly, you will be at the other end before it comes in there, and you can walk out on the strand."

"But if we are not quick enough?" asked Brown, Jones, and Robinson.

"Why, then you'll all be drowned," said the boatmen, coolly.

"Go on," said Walter Lockwood: "there's no danger, and we have time enough."

And now the boatmen landing their cargo on the wild floor of rocks, put back, saying, they would wait at the other end.

So here were our friends, all wandering on through the heart of these great rocks, which opened above them into great domes and shadowy halls, with glittering pillars and fantastic masses of white stone. But the fear of being caught by the tide urged them on; the light from the strand grew stronger and stronger before them; and, at last, out they issued on the chalky shore, like dazzling snow before their dazzled eyes.

The boatmen were ready to conduct them to other caves; the Dove-cot, the Kirk-hole, and still more great sea-caves, into which the tide was rolling and thundering, against the huge blocks of their Cyclopean walls.

Returning from this voyage of wonders, an unfortunate gull soared carelessly over the boat. At once, Brown, Jones, and Robinson sprang up, and levelled their pieces at her.

"Mind!" cried Mr. Hunnybun; "they're going to shoot."

"Good gracious!" shrieked Mrs. Hunnybun: "they're going to kill us all!"

"Don't point at me!" shouted Bennington.

"Aim at me! Aim at me!" screamed Pennington.

But bang—bang—bang! went off their barrels. The gull soared as carelessly as ever above their heads.

Bang—bang—bang, went off the second discharge of the barrels, Brown setting the butt-end of his gun to his stomach as he fired. The gull still soared as securely as ever above their heads.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Brown, Jones, and Robinson, all at once—"What shot a gull will carry!"

"It must have it to carry first!" said one of the boatmen, with a laugh, to Walter Lockwood.

"Why did you say 'Aim at me!' Pennington?" asked Bennington.

"Because I was sure that what those young men aimed at they would not hit," returned Pennington.

There was a general laugh, in which Brown, Jones, and Robinson did not join.

Augustus now took aim at the gull.

"Don't shoot!" exclaimed Walter Lockwood. But it was too late: the shot was fired, and the gull dropped, whirling down into the water close to them.

"There!" cried Brown, Jones, and Robinson. "We knew we had hit it. It would have dropped of itself if you had let it alone."

"I told you not to shoot," cried Lockwood to Augustus. "I knew they would declare they had killed it. If you had let it alone it would have lived for a century."

Brown, Jones, and Robinson looked thunderbolts.

But now the party put on shore. Brown, Jones, and Robinson rushed up the steep strand, and looked resolved to lay waste the game of a whole lordship. Mr. Hunnybun took an old fisherman, who offered himself as guide, along the headlands to the lighthouse. Here they strolled along the short velvet turf that covered the headlands, and looked down with awe and wonder amongst the cliffs and precipices, the battered pinnacles springing from the sea, and which in spring were covered with legions of sea-fowl, rooks, pigeons, jackdaws, and ravens amongst them, but which now were all gone. The day was fine; hundreds of white sail were scattered over the ocean. The air was delicious, and the sound of the waves dashing up against the rocks far below, made the walk delightful. Walter Lockwood and Augustus now shot down the game for which they had brought their guns; and these were the wheat-ears, the English ortolans, which frequent these downs, and which are excellent eating.

At noon the little party adjourned to the little cottage inn, near the landing-place, to a rustic dinner. As they approached the inn they heard a tremendous firing in the neighbouring fields, and soon saw Brown, Jones, and Robinson, in full pursuit of their game.

Anon, as our friends were seated over a beef-steak, and a few glasses of pale ale, in came the three sportsmen, covered with dust, and ordered "tea" to cool them.

"You have made a terrible slaughter, gentlemen," said Lockwood.

" We have had good sport, capital sport!" said Brown.

" But where is it?" said Lockwood.

" It was so heavy, and no use to us here, you know,—that,—eh!—that—we gave it to the guide!" said Brown.

" A capital thing for him!" said Jones.

" A regular god-send!" said Robinson.

" Well, gentlemen, at all events you've had a lark," said Lockwood, holding up at the same time the little bird bearing that name, which the three had shot.

The cockney sportsmen—for they were such—looked confounded; the whole Hunnybun party laughed, and soon after the three went out, wondering how in the world Lockwood had discovered their secret, when they had given the guide money to keep it.

The Hunnybun party, after dinner, hired a stage-coach that stood at the inn door, to drive them to the Danes' dyke, an ancient mound of the Danes' construction, running from Speeton Cliffs to near Bridlington, and by which the Danes fortified Flamborough Head in one of their incursions.

At five o'clock the steamer took them up again; and Brown, Jones, and Robinson, seated in a row on the paddle-box, with cigars or short pipes in mouth, made a goodly show in their sporting costume, and their mild countenances, ruminating over the disappointment and ludicrous exposures of the day.

And so once more our voyagers set foot in Scarborough, right merry over their adventures.

CHAPTER V.

TREATS CHIEFLY OF AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY WHICH AUGUSTUS MADE
AT HULL, BUT ENDS WITH A PLEASANT BREAKFAST.

AND now the Hunnybuns were involved in prodigious gaieties. They had taken their family ticket, which admitted them for the time of their intended stay to the full enjoyment of the gardens on the cliffs, or the walks, as they are called, lying just below their house, and to the saloon at the Spa, with its twice a week concerts and daily playing of the brass band in the open air. Mr. Walter Lockwood was located at the Crown Hotel, just by them, the great aristocratic quarters, except for such old families as occupied their accustomed private lodgings on the Old Cliff, as it is called. They had dined with Mr. Lockwood, and had been introduced to the drawing-room in the evening, where the company met, and where there was music and dancing to every young heart's content. Bennington and Pennington were at Blanchard's: and there too the Hunnybuns had been, and partaken of the gaieties and society of the house. Mr. Lockwood had friends, too, at the Royal Hotel; and to them too the Hunnybuns had been introduced. Nothing, therefore, was left but that they must give a party,—and a very gay party it was; for Mrs. Hunnybun too had made so many delightful acquaintances, and Mr. Hunnybun had made so many more—cordial old neighbours from town, whose faces were as familiar to him as his own morning-gown, but to whom he had never before spoken. These he had met at Mr. Theakstone's pleasant news-room, where he and Pennington and Bennington went every morning to charge themselves with their daily store of news, which they discussed on the benches of the walks, and enlightened their friends with—families the two latter gentlemen had none with them—at dinner-time.

Thus engagements and jollities grew amain. There were



Arigata Hurnzykun.



daily afternoon drives and rides into the country round, for the mornings were taken up with bathing and sauntering about. And fine scampering equestrian parties these were : Augustus, Angela, Walter Lockwood, Quintus and Mira even, the one on a roan pony, the other on a gentle and slender white horse, which Lockwood had named *Mon blanc*. Other young ladies and gentlemen joined them, forming into a grand cavalcade, only sometimes too helter-skelter for the graver natives. Quintus and Mira rode like two little Arabs, and, as Lockwood informed them, excited the anger of certain old farmers near the town; one of whom, leaning over his gate, ejaculated gruffly as they galloped by, " Wanten a job! wanten a good birches rod about their backs!"

However, no harm came of it ; they were all very merry and happy ; and, besides riding parties, other parties were formed which they were invited to join. A steamer trip to Robin's Hood's Bay and Whitby was proposed ; but to Whitby Mr. Hunnybun said positively he would not go.

" Not go to Whitby !" exclaimed Pennington : " Not see those fine old cliffs ! "

" Not see the old Abbey and the alum quarries !" said Lockwood.

" No, none of these," said Mr. Hunnybun, doggedly : " I don't want one shilling to tell me how another looks. I've seen Flamborough Head ; they are not finer than that ! "

But to-morrow were the boat-races, and Mrs. Philliskirk and Whitby were forgotten. In a few days there were to be horse-races on the sands, and in a week a grand ball at the Crown ; all the élite of the Scarborough visitors were to be there—lords, ladies, and all. The shops were already full of attractive ball costume, the tickets were in great demand, and all the young heads and heels were in agitation about this greatest ball of the season. The Hunnybuns possessed themselves of tickets immediately. Angela was already universally admired ; she had no occasion to display her beauty amid the crowd of beauties that daily paraded the Dene Bridge and the walks. There were busy whispers that she was already engaged to the handsome and wealthy young Lockwood of Lockwood.

This might not be exactly true ; but then we know what

is the staple of conversation at these gay watering-places : what match-making is for ever going on, and in Scarborough pre-eminently : what speculation there is about all those gay and handsome young ladies that you meet there,—and not young ones only : what tender hopes are said to have confidently drawn widows and widowers to that enchanted spot : what a reputation has the Crown for aristocratic acquaintance-making in the matrimonial line : what a still greater reputation the Talbot for *bourgeois* alliances. At New York you are said constantly to hear, as you walk the streets, the words dollars! dollars!—and it is very certain that, in crossing the Dene Bridge at Scarborough, you do constantly catch the phrases, “Is she rich? Who are his connections? Is she so handsome, then? Who is that old lady with those beautiful Miss Flytraps? Is she really a rich old aunt, think you?”

You perpetually hear such odd sentences floating over that bridge of sighs, like those of Munchausen’s wintry horn in the warm vernal air. Even Bennington declared that conversing most socially with a gay widow one day in one of the picturesque moss-houses in the walks, she gave some most ominous sighs,—said that “the sun of her happiness was set, and that she wished she was a clod of the valley!” At which he, believing her to be ill, started up and asked if he should fetch a doctor. The next day, however, a new sun seemed to be rising for her, in the form of a Puseyite clergyman who seemed considerably fascinated by her.

But now came the boat-races. At eight o’clock the Hunnybuns and all Scarborough were roused by the firing of cannon. It proceeded from Lord Landesborough’s yacht, which, as some hundreds of visitors springing from bed and peeping out through the sides of their blinds, might see, was lying in the open bay with flags of all nations streaming from its rigging. There were also two or three other yachts, equally decorated, and whole fleets of boats also lying ready for the pastimes of the day.

All morning, fishing vessels came sailing in from Hull and Whitby, and other places; the bay was crowded with cobbles, the pier and the heights all round with eager spectators. At noon a cannon, fired from the yacht of Lord Landesborough, who gave the prizes, announced the com-

mencement of the sports. We shall not describe them. Six boats at a time contended for each prize, sailing round a flag-boat a mile off, and so back again. Great, of course, was the interest and the enthusiasm excited by each of these contests; but the great fun of the day was the walking a greased pole for a pig and two sovereigns. This pole, the mast of a yawl, was fastened by its thick end into the wall of the pier, under the light-house, and suspended horizontally over the water by a rope from the other end secured to the balcony of the light-house. The object was for the candidates to walk this pole without falling into the water, to let the pig out of the trap fall into the sea, plunge in after it, and capture it. But many were the aspirants for the prize who plunged headlong into the water before reaching the middle of the pole; and that amid the loud shouts and laughter of the people, who stood thick and dense as a swarm of bees upon the pier and lighthouse, as well as in boats. All were sworn before trying that they could swim, or they might have been drowned. Twice was the prize won, for Lord Landesborough bought it in once; and about five o'clock all the little boys of the town might be seen accompanying the prize-pig home, full of pity for it because it had "been in t' watter."

The next day, Mr. Walter Lockwood set off for a few days to Lockwood, intending to be back for the ball, for which great preparations were making not only by our Hunnybun friends, but by all the ladies, old and young, in Scarborough.

It happened also at this time, that some communication from town made it necessary for Mr. Hunnybun to send Augustus to Hull; he returned only the day before the ball. But what a discovery had he made! Mr. Walter Lockwood, the handsome and wealthy Lockwood of Lockwood, as they had supposed, was—a cheesemonger of Hull! Augustus had actually seen him there—seen him in his shop—at his desk! There he was, and no mistake, writing at his shop-desk, posting his books no doubt, or putting down orders for cheese, bacon, and hams, and other such abominations as these articles now seemed to the Hunnybuns,—in which it was evident he dealt largely.

Augustus was almost knocked down by this accidental

discovery ; he stared at the dreadful apparition, thinking at first that some singular likeness had deceived him. But no —it was Mr. Walter Lockwood, and no one else. Seated at his desk, writing, Augustus believed he had seen him, as stopping a moment to speak to his shopman, he lifted his head. It was a *monstrum horrendum* discovery. Augustus staggered back into the middle of the street, and gazed wildly at the name over the shop. Yes, there it was, sure enough,—“W. Lockwood, Wholesale and Retail Dealer in Cheese, Butter, Hams, and Bacon!”

“Cheese, Butter, Hams, and Bacon!” said poor Augustus, in a distracted way, to himself. “Confound the commodities, and him that sells them!” he ejaculated, and rushed down the street. He was at that moment on his way to the station : he stopped ; he thought he would turn back, walk right into the shop, and confront the detestable impostor. But no, he did not feel nerve enough ; he was knocked down by this astounding discovery. He must go home, and get up his strength for a terrible explosion. He would let Lockwood come to the great ball, and there he would confront him before all the company. But no, that would not do either. He knew that the affair had gone a great way between Lockwood and Angela ; he had encouraged it, his uncle and aunt had encouraged it ; and a public exposure was not to be thought of. It would kill Angela, and disgrace them.

Augustus, therefore, went home in a malignant fever, muttering to himself as the train rushed on, “Cheese and Butter ! Hams and Bacon !” It was now his turn, instead of his uncle’s, to be thought a little wrong in the head.

By the time he reached home he was as dispirited as Brown, Jones, and Robinson ; and, like them, he would have smoked a cigar for consolation, but that cigars were strictly forbidden in a railway carriage.

“What’s amiss, Augustus dear ?” exclaimed Angela. “You are ill !”

“Oh, very ill !” exclaimed Mrs. Hunnybun. “How dreadfully you look !”

“Has there been an accident, a concussion on the line ?” asked Mr. Hunnybun, also in great alarm.

Augustus knew not what to do ; he saw one line on

which there would be a terrific concussion the moment the fatal secret was out. But there was no help for it. To-morrow was the ball,—it must out; and then what would become of poor Angela?

If there be an heroic act in this world it is the retention of an extraordinary piece of news for which everybody is impatient, although the divulgence of it would be like a spark in a powder-mill. But this piece of heroism Augustus resolved to achieve. He was determined that his sister and the Hunnybun seniors should have one more quiet night's rest; he therefore only said that he had a bilious headache, which was brought on by something which disagreed with him at Hull.

"That's soon put to rights," said Mr. Hunnybun, who very cheerfully and straightway brought from his portable medicine-chest his fixed remedy for bilious headache—*Pilula Hydrarg. gr. v. hora somni capienda*, and *Pulvis Rhei* and *Sal. Polychrest* next morning.

Augustus promised faithfully to take these; he meant—take them up stairs, and throw them out of the window: which he accordingly did.

Let any feeling person imagine what a night Augustus passed. While all the other Hunnybuns were sleeping as if there were no such thing as a deceitful cheesemonger in existence; Mr. Hunnybun snoring very harmoniously; Angela dreaming of the ball and all her triumphs in the eyes of Lockwood of Lockwood, and of scores of envious beauties; while all this was going on in sleep and dreams, there lay poor Augustus tossing and turning like an eel on a spear,—but very much more uneasily of course, because eels are said to like it.

But morning came; and Augustus entered the breakfast room looking as bilious as ever, complaining as much as ever.

"My dear fellow; how's this?" asked Mr. Hunnybun "did you take your physic?"

"Oh yes," said Augustus, mournfully: "I took it, sure enough—popped it down in a minute,—but it's done me no good."

"God bless my soul!" said poor Mr. Hunnybun: "The drugs must be bad,—we'll have a doctor." And so saying he started up, intending to fetch one himself.

"Stop, uncle, stop!" said Augustus, seizing him by the arm: "Doctors won't do me good, nor physic either; I've something on my mind."

"God bless me!" again exclaimed Mr. Hunnybun, but this time more cheerfully. "On your mind have you, eh?" added he; naturally supposing the young man was in love.

Augustus took his uncle into the next room, leaving his aunt and Angela in a strange state of wonder and perplexity.

"It's a very bad job, uncle!" said Augustus, looking paler than ever. "I don't know how Angela and my aunt will bear it, but that Walter Lockwood is a cheesemonger! he is, upon my soul, uncle,—a cheesemonger of Hull!"

Mr. Hunnybun started as if he had received a violent blow, and then stood motionless and rigid as one of the upright stones at Stonehenge.

"A cheesemonger!" at length he said: "Nonsense! he is a landed proprietor,—he is Lockwood of Lockwood!"

"He calls himself so," said Augustus. "He said he was going to Lockwood, but he was going to Hull! I've seen him myself in his shop,—have seen his name over the door!"

"God bless my soul!" said Mr. Hunnybun, staring at the wall. "Why," added he, after a pause, "Michael Purdy, the bone-merchant, is nothing to this! God bless me!" And with that he turned right round, bolted into the breakfast-room, and without the slightest consideration for Angela's feelings, so overpowering was his amazement, exclaimed, "Could you believe it? Mr. Walter Lockwood is nothing but a cheesemonger!"

There were instantaneously two dreadful and piercing screams, two breakfast cups fell with a smash to the floor, old Clouds ran away yelling, believing himself to be frightfully scalded.

"Uncle! uncle! what made you do that?" exclaimed Augustus, rushing forward to catch Angela, who was falling into a hysterical swoon, just in time to save her from falling on the fender. Thus saving her, like the best of brothers as he was, he laid her on a sofa, where she went off comfortably into a death-like swoon. Poor Mrs. Hunnybun! she too required attention, having sunk of herself into a

large chair, where she too might have swooned off also, but that affectionate anxiety for Angela soon roused her again into activity. Mr. Hunnybun, in the meantime, really went off for the doctor,—informing him that the nerves of the two ladies had received a shock by a sudden piece of ill news; but what news it of course was unnecessary to say.

It was all over now with the ball. Such a catastrophe was enough to shatter all the nerves in Scarborough.

But Angela was a heroine. In the morning she besought her uncle to let them instantly quit Scarborough, which, not being quite possible, was deferred till the next day; and in the afternoon, being sufficiently recovered to leave the sofa, when she saw all her beautiful things which had been prepared in readiness for the evening's ball, she first shed a violent flood of tears, then took a new and desperate resolve. She would go to the ball; she would meet and cut that base, base impostor! No sooner was this brilliant conception formed, than Angela rushed down stairs and communicated her resolve to her brother.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Augustus; "Bravo! that's like a girl of spirit; I am proud of you!"

All was soon arranged, and though Mr. and Mrs. Hunnybun themselves declined going, a most desirable chaperon was instantly found to take charge of Angela, who was confessedly one of the prettiest girls in Scarborough.

Angela made her appearance in superb costume, and the excitement and emotion of the morning gave a dignity and somewhat haughty expression to her countenance, which only added to its effect. Nobody knew her secret but her brother, and he was ever by her side.

According to former arrangements Lockwood was to meet them at the ball, and Angela was engaged to him for the first dance. They entered the room: there was Mr. Walter Lockwood, and oh, sight of wonder, astounding audacity on his part! there was he in actual conversation with Lady Landesborough. No sooner, however, did his eye catch the Hunnybun brother and sister, than quitting her company, he hastened to them, and was received with the most frosty indifference.

"What is the meaning of this? For Heaven's sake, Angela, what does it mean?" said Lockwood, in an under-

tone of the most painful surprise. He had never addressed her before as Angela ; this little circumstance, which, under other circumstances, would have been like music to her ear, only now, from the lips of a cheesemonger, acted like an insult ; and with the dignity of an offended queen, she swept from him.

He stood aghast ; he could scarcely stammer forth, "What means this ?" Augustus said, sternly, " You know, sir !" and Angela, beset with solicitations for the dance, regardless of her engagement to Lockwood, was led away triumphantly by a young man who, said one elderly lady to another, was the best marriageable man in the room, being the only son of a millionaire.

Gracious heavens, what a scene was this ! All the room saw that something was amiss—that the beautiful Miss Hunnybun, the niece of that rich old Londoner, had quarrelled with Lockwood of Lockwood, to whom everybody thought she was engaged ; and now there was a chance for all the other young men, and for the young ladies also, for Lockwood was now free ! Did not everybody see how that young London puppy had cut him ! But why did Lockwood look so down-hearted about it ? He ought to have more spirit ! And look now, he was dancing with one of those handsome Miss Flytraps, and she had a large fortune, too ; oh, he would soon get over the loss of Miss Hunnybun ; and the Flytrap-aunt, from whom, it was said, all the money was to come, looked on well pleased, and declared that it had always been a wonder to her what that young Lockwood could see in that Miss Hunnybun that people made such a fuss about ; and did not everybody know that her uncle, the old gentleman who wasn't there to-night, was out of his mind ? She had heard the queerest things about him at Filey. But just as she was about to communicate these to her confidential friend, she beheld a sight which was not less amazing to her than to Augustus Hunnybun ; for glancing round the room after several dances with a most fascinating little girl, this young man beheld, not only Walter Lockwood talking to his sister, but his sister in the midst of the ball-room, first looking very pale, whilst she spoke in a low voice, and then suddenly become not only crimson with blushing, but beamingly beautiful as if with a

divine joy, as she listened to something which Lockwood spoke in return.

Augustus's fingers tingled and his blood boiled, and forgetting his fascinating partner, he exclaimed to himself, "Can she be so weak—what a foolish thing is woman! By Jove, I believe she loves the fellow!"

The dance was ended, and Angela was at her brother's side, whispering in his ear, "I must speak with you, Augustus,—let us get out of this crowd. Oh, I have something so particular to say to you. It's all a mistake; you are quite wrong. That man at Hull is his cousin!"

"What nonsense!" said Augustus, feeling still more angry in the belief that this was only a deeper imposition.

The brother and sister found an ante-room, where they could speak more freely. "Oh, Augustus! what a mistake you made, what a fright you have put us in!" said Angela, speaking in a low, joyful voice. "But, thank Heaven, it is only a mistake! He *is* Walter Lockwood of Lockwood: he loves me, dear Augustus! It is his cousin who is that horrid man in Hull. How could you ever think that our Mr. Lockwood was a cheesemonger!"

"He is deceiving you again," said Augustus.

"No, no! I am quite sure he is not;" returned the happy Angela. "I would believe him before all the world. But to convince you, he will take you or my uncle over to Lockwood or to Hull!"

Augustus was not obstinate; he was very willing to be proved in the wrong. The two returned to the ball-room, determined to enjoy to the utmost all the pleasures it offered them, and which were most consonant to their feelings.

The elderly ladies sat and gossiped, or looked up from their cards, and wondered at another change in the magic lantern. Lockwood, of Lockwood, was once more dancing with old Hunnybun's niece; and the old Flytrap-aunt had a great consolation in this state of affairs, for it left the son of the millionaire at liberty; and why should he not be caught by one of her own nieces?

Angela's chaperon was proud of her charge, and the most good-natured soul in the world; she did not hurry the young people away; and they returned home so late, or rather so early in the morning, that Mr. Hunnybun, who

had quite intended to sit up for them, was forced to go to bed. Thus neither she nor her husband learned the unexpected truth as soon as they otherwise would, and hence the little occurrence which has yet to be related.

Early in the morning, that is about two hours after the young people's return, Mr. Hunnybun was taking a stroll in the walks, when at a sudden turn he came face to face with Walter Lockwood.

"Ha! Mr. Hunnybun," said Lockwood, in his frank way, "I was coming to see you as early as possible this morning. I am glad to meet you here."

"Hem!" said Mr. Hunnybun, chuffily.

"I have just made a discovery."

"So have I, sir," interrupted Mr. Hunnybun.

"Which," continued the young man, "makes it necessary for me to speak out plainly."

"That's precisely my case, sir," said Mr. Hunnybun, looking very frosty.

"And if you make us so happy as to give your sanction—"

"Sanction!" said Mr. Hunnybun, "there needs none; my niece has altered her mind—irrevocably altered it."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lockwood, "why should she?"

"Why should she?" repeated Mr. Hunnybun, with a sort of galvanic chuckle. "Ha! ha! Well, well, Mr. Lockwood, never mind! I did think you as solid as double Gloucester. But though you've buttered your bread to save your bacon, neither Shem, Ham, nor Japhet, shall take me in!" The old gentleman was getting very angry, and was about to move off.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Lockwood, seizing him by the arm, "have they not told you what a foolish idea that was—that about the cheesemonger?"

"Foolish story, eh! Poh! Did not my nephew see you in your own shop?"

"Saw me in a shop!" continued Lockwood.

"And your name over the door?"

"Yes; W. Lockwood over the door," said he.

"Well, then, Mr. W. Lockwood, I beg you to release my arm; as a cheesemonger you might have been an honest man; but, sir, you are an impostor!"

Lockwood held him firmly, and said, "But, my dear sir,

you must hear me. The cheesemonger is a cousin of mine, Mr. William Lockwood—an excellent young man; it was *his* shop, not *mine*, that your nephew saw; it is *his* name, and not *mine*, which is over the door."

"What!" said Mr. Hunnybun, feeling at once truth in the young man's manner; "it's your cousin, then, who deals in cheese,—not you!"

"Precisely: my cousin William Lockwood, and a clever, sensible fellow, too. I always go to his house when I am at Hull."

"And Augustus and Angela know this?" asked Mr. Hunnybun.

"Every word of it. It was all explained last night. But you all seem to have such a horror of cheese and bacon," said Walter, laughing.

"Oh, no, no, sir, I assure you!" said Mr. Hunnybun, looking very red and rather foolish, "but you mistake; it was the idea of an impostor—not merely of a cheesemonger—which one abhorred."

"And quite right, too," said Lockwood: and with that he and Mr. Hunnybun shook hands most vigorously, and the next moment the old gentleman taking his arm, they might be seen walking up and down the esplanade in confidential talk, before they turned into Mr. Hunnybun's for breakfast.

That breakfast! Ah, that breakfast would have been worth anything to a young poet or novelist. The blushes and beauty of Angela; the quiet smiles of Mrs. Hunnybun; the officious heartiness of Mr. Hunnybun to dispel every recollection of cheese and bacon; Augustus's pride, and Quintus and Mira's wonder. But that breakfast is over. It was a right pleasant time, spite of a few mistakes which will occur in the best regulated families. But it is over, and the Hunnybuns at home are beginning already to ponder on still pleasanter times and events yet to be. Good luck to them!

"And when they next shall go abroad,
May we be there to see!"

SOME LOVE-PASSAGES IN THE LIVES OF EVERY-DAY PEOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

LOVE IN AMBUSH.

MR. JOSEPH HILYARD was a rich dyer in one of our large manufacturing towns, a plodding, hard-headed man of business, who never lost sight of the main chance but once, and that was when he married old Green's daughter, with seven thousand pounds to her fortune, instead of his first and his real love, Ellen Stretton, who had nothing. He soon found out how fatal a mistake he had made, for his wealthy wife was an unhappy-tempered woman, who made everybody miserable about her.

Ellen Stretton married, also, two years afterwards, not for love, and was not more happy than Hilyard. Her husband, whose name was Trevisham, was also a dyer, as hard-headed a man as Hilyard, but without his good qualities : he was always in law with somebody ; he had a desperate law-suit with Hilyard about the fence of their drying-grounds, which unfortunately adjoined ; it was but a small thing to quarrel about, but, like a rolling snow-ball, it grew at every turn, and in the end brought on his ruin. He lost his law-suit, and then he died, leaving his affairs in a very bad state. When all were wound up, the creditors, out of compassion



Eliza Trelton!



to the widow, whom everybody respected, gave up sufficient to ensure her and her only child, a daughter, an annuity of seventy pounds for her life.

Hilyard had been a fierce adversary to the husband, and she felt a peculiar grief to see herself, in some measure, ruined by his means ;—still she was not without comfort, even in her depressed circumstances,—she had good health, a cheerful disposition, a heart full of love both to God and man, a beloved daughter, whom she herself was able to educate well, and, beyond all, now that poor Mr. Trevisham was gone, peace and comfort at her fireside, such as she had never known in her most prosperous days. Let nobody exclaim at this,—for it is true that “ Better is a dinner of herbs with love, than a stalled ox and dissension therewith.” Many a time did Mrs. Trevisham say Amen to those words with her whole soul.

Hilyard had gained the great law-suit, and his adversary was dead. “ There was a triumph for him ! ” people said ; but he did not exactly find it so. When the man was dead and gone, and his drying-grounds added to his own still more extensive ones, many a reproachful remembrance of the widow and her child came into his mind. His own wife, who had been the thorn in his side and the quill-feather in his down-pillow for so many years, had in process of time, like poor Mr. Trevisham, gone to her long rest, and now he thought with himself whether he should not endeavour to realize the dream of his youth, and make atonement for the wrongs of his after years by marrying the Widow Trevisham : that is, of course, if he could persuade her to recall the long-lost sentiment of former years.

He thought a deal about it ; he had never spoken to her for years—in fact it was years now since he had even seen her, for though they dwelt in the same town, he lived in a large square stone house, which a lawyer had built, and which he had purchased, in one suburb, and she, since her misfortunes, as they were called, lived in a little cottage—a very little one—in an opposite direction. He questioned, as I have said, whether he should marry her ; somehow or other the thing itself seemed strange to him, after what had taken place, and the thought so often occurred, that perhaps she might entertain strong resentment against him, as well as

that everybody would make a great talk about it, so that at last he decided in his own mind that his marrying days were over.

People saw him buttoned up in his good broad-cloth, going steadily about his business and making his fifteen hundred a-year, and never for a moment suspected the romance which had taken possession of his naturally good and affectionate heart.

One day he took a drive to the little suburban village in which the widow lived, and, leaving his chaise at the inn, strolled up the lane in which her cottage stood. He had no idea of making a call, not the slightest in the world, he only wanted to see the place. It was a very small cottage ; two gentlewomen, living on seventy pounds a-year, could not afford a large house.

"It cannot be above eight or nine pounds a-year," mused he to himself ; "a kitchen, a parlour, and two bed-rooms, with a little wash-house at the back, that must be all ; but it is prodigiously neat, and has a mighty pretty garden ;—Ellen was always fond of flowers ;" and with that the sunny, rose-scented days of their youth came to his memory bewitchingly. "They keep a girl, no doubt, to do the housework ; they could not afford a servant at full wages," continued his musings ; "I wonder if any of their relations help them ?—But, poor thing, she had so few relations, and none of them rich, and he was such a spendthrift that he drained his own family—I don't believe there is one that would help her ; the Trevishams have not a bit of heart among them !"

So pondered Mr. Hilyard as he walked up the lane ; in a while he made a stand, and, turning round, took a steady survey of the back of the cottage. There was little to be seen but a thick holly-hedge, a green water-butt, the little back-kitchen window, the cottage roof, and one chimney. It was about the middle of November, in the afternoon, and Mrs. Trevisham and her sweet daughter Kitty, then just turned fifteen, were sitting at the little parlour fire, the daughter reading and the mother at her sewing. Kitty had just put on some coal, and the little servant-maid in the little kitchen had just broken up her fire and put the kettle on for tea ; there was only, as I said, one chimney to the

cottage, and these movements at the two fires had sent the smoke curling out of the chimney, which made quite a picturesque effect against the dull gray November sky. And it was at this very smoke which Mr. Joseph Hilyard, with his comfortable income of fifteen hundred a-year, now stood looking; he was not, however, noticing the picturesque effect, but, in imagination, was picturing to himself the little household that was assembled beside the fire from which this smoke proceeded.

You may take my word for it that Joseph Hilyard, middle-aged man and dyer though he was, had a very vivid imagination, for the picture which he thus saw warmed his heart to its very core; the broadcloth in which he was enveloped was nothing to the warmth of his heart. He walked back again past the little green gate which led to the house-door; a little girl was coming up with her milk-can, and, turning in at the green gate, knocked at the door. He was a wealthy man, as we know, and a girl taking milk to his own house would have excited no interest in his mind; and yet he stopped to see who would open the door to take in this pennyworth of milk. It was only the little servant-girl.

At the bottom of the little garden he stopped again, and looked at the front of the cottage; the fire that was burning in parlour and kitchen cast a glow within, for it was getting dusk, and by the parlour-window stood Kitty reading, for she had gone to the window for light. The outline of the bent head, and the youthful bust, sent a still warmer glow to his heart; it reminded him of that Ellen Stretton who had once been all the world to him. With hasty steps he then returned to the inn, ordered out his chaise, drank a glass of negus, and drove home to his large square house, and his many servants.

People talk a deal about "the luxury of doing good." Mr. Joseph Hilyard determined that he would enjoy this luxury; but he did not say a word to any one—not a syllable. He thought a deal about the cottage fireside and seventy pounds a-year. Christmas-day was not far off, and he remembered that people could not have fine Christmas dinners with only seventy pounds a-year. Two days before Christmas-day, therefore, the carrier's cart stopped at Mrs. Trevisham's

cottage, and left, carriage paid, a large hamper. It was carried into the little kitchen, and the little servant-maid summoned her mistress to open it.

"Dear me! what can it be?" exclaimed Mrs. Trevisham, as the girl hastily cut the strings and opened the creaking lid of the hamper. "Kitty, come here!" And Kitty came instantly out of the parlour with her sewing in her hand, which, however, she soon threw down to help in unpacking the hamper;—a turkey, a ham, a dozen of mince-pies, so beautifully packed that not one was broken, a game-pie, such almonds and raisins, and delicious fruit for dessert, and a dozen of wine!

"Who can have sent them? What can it mean?" exclaimed both mother and daughter.

It was long since Mrs. Trevisham had had a regular Christmas dinner of her own; now and then she and her daughter were asked out, but not often; now, however, here was a splendid dinner for them, and who must they invite to partake of it? Oh, there were plenty of poor folks who should have some of it; that was soon decided; and then nothing was thought of for the rest of the evening but who could have sent this present? They could not imagine; it *might* be this person and it *might* be that; but they hardly thought it could be either. They never guessed the right person—how, indeed, should they?

It was now five years since this first Christmas-dinner was sent, and at the same time precisely, for the next four years, did the same carrier's cart bring the same present, or slightly varied, to the widow's house. It was a pleasant mystery; it was a real comfort to know that there was *somebody* who cared that much for them. But the delicacies of that Christmas provision were not eaten alone by the widow and her daughter; some poor neighbour, some sick woman or man, or invalid child, was always a partaker; and as to the wine, Mrs. Trevisham's little cellar was now never without a supply. She and her daughter only drank a glass now and then, on very extraordinary occasions; on Christmas-day, for instance, when they drank the health of their unknown benefactor; but the sick poor of that populous neighbourhood had many a vial-bottle filled from her store, which often did more good than physic. Indeed, dear reader, I cannot

tell you all the good which these Christmas presents did to Mrs. Trevisham and her poor neighbours.

One day, when it was getting rather dusk, Mr. Hilyard took another walk up that lane. A gentleman overtook him; it was the good parish doctor; they walked on together, and fell into discourse. Mr. Hilyard was one of those rich men who do very little actual good with their money. The fact was, he had never thought about it; he subscribed to the Bible Society and Foreign Missions, and the Tract Association, and, as he paid his workpeople's wages regularly, he thought he did all that was required from him. He was a stranger, of course, to the doctor, and they began to talk about the poor, of whom this good man knew so much. He said how much more the wealthy ought to do for the poor than they commonly do; that it was often those in straitened circumstances who were their greatest benefactors. And then he proved this by saying how much a lady and her daughter who lived in that very lane, and whose income was under a hundred a-year, did for their poor neighbours; how the mother visited them, and was a friend under all circumstances; and when they were ill sent them the best of wine, which was often the means of their recovery, though he questioned if either she or her daughter drank wine themselves, for they had been the means of establishing a Temperance Society, which had done a deal of good. He said that this Mrs. Trevisham was the kindest and most Christian woman he knew, and that it was a pity that she had not the means of doing all the good she might; and her daughter, he said, was a pattern to all young ladies; he believed that she and her mother were obliged to make out their income by doing needlework, but, for all that, the daughter found time to teach in the Ragged School, which never would have been established but for her, and that she herself gave half-a-guinea to its funds.

Mr. Joseph Hilyard pulled out his large well-filled green silk purse, and gave the doctor five pounds for this school, which donation he said must be put down as from a friend; and then taking leave of the good man, he turned back and walked slowly down the lane. Again the cottage chimney smoked, and again his heart was as warm as if he had sat by its fire. He was filled with all sorts of grand schemes of beneficence;

he would do—he did not know what, for such excellent people as these.

While he was thus vaguely thinking he approached the cottage ; the door opened, and out came Kitty Trevisham in her dark merino dress, plaid shawl, and straw bonnet trimmed with dark-blue ribbon. She looked at Mr. Hilyard as she came out, and then walked briskly on as if she had business in hand. She was a sweet, bright-looking creature, with the kindest eyes that were ever set in a human countenance. When she came within sight of the parlour-window she looked towards it, smiled sweetly, and nodded ; Mr. Hilyard looked also, and there stood the mother, in a plain cap and black dress, and nodded affectionately to her daughter.

This little circumstance expressed a great deal ; mother and daughter were all the world to each other : there was the most perfectly good understanding between them, and the last look, even for an absence of an hour or two, was full of affectionate intelligence.

She walked on briskly, and he followed ; she had such a neat, pretty figure. She walked uncommonly well, and had a remarkably pretty foot and ankle, as he could see when she held up her dress where the road was wet.

“ I wish I were a young man for her sake ! ” thought Mr. Hilyard to himself ; “ now I wonder who she will marry ? ” and with that, all at once, a grand idea floated into his mind. He would send for his nephew, Edward Grey, and adopt him as his son, and he should marry this good and pretty daughter of widow Trevisham ! It was a splendid idea. This nephew was the son of his only sister, who had married a poor schoolmaster in the country. She had often asked him to do something for this her eldest son ; he was said to be a fine scholar, a very gentlemanly young man, of excellent principles, and he was now six-and-twenty. He could not think how he had never done anything for him before ; he felt all at once as if he had been a hard-hearted wretch ; never, till that day, had he given a penny even to a Ragged School. Well, he would turn over a new leaf now ; he would send for his nephew, get him married to this poor, but good girl, and then he should no longer be ashamed of himself.

Little did sweet Kitty Trevisham know the schemes

which were working in the head of the respectable gentleman who was following her. She was going to the Ragged School for a couple of hours that evening, and she was thinking of nothing but her poor scholars.

In a month's time Edward Grey was at his uncle's, as handsome a young man as his mother had described him, with an open countenance, and a great deal of decision in his manner. He was one of those men who in reality do not need any one to help them on in life; the elements of success are in themselves: and men of this character are not such as can have a path chalked out for them by another. Joseph Hilyard found his nephew a very different person to what he expected. He fancied that he would be pliable and extremely grateful, and that he should open his plans to him with respect to Kitty Trevisham, immediately, but there was an independence about him which it did not seem safe to interfere with, and almost an indifference about the large income of which, if he pleased, he might be the heir, so that his uncle felt pretty sure that if he all at once revealed his designs, his nephew would turn restive on his hands. With all this there was so much manliness and straightforward honesty of character about him, that he could not help feeling respect for him. "Besides which," as the foreman said, "he took very kindly to the business," and seemed at once so thoroughly to understand it, that there was no doubt of his becoming a most valuable assistant, if not partner.

They were, in fact, two of the most excellent men that ever met; yet, in some respects, they were so similar in character, that while they remained in any degree strangers to each other, they worked ill together. Edward Grey was unlike any person with whom his uncle had come in contact; as yet he had been sole king and master of his world; he had no idea but of remaining so, and now here was a young man whom he had introduced into it, carrying everything his own way, and that with the utmost quietness and apparent self-complacency. He never asked his uncle's leave for what he did, and yet he established directly a Temperance Society among the men, and set about forming a Mechanics' Institute for the whole town. Mr. Hilyard, as we said, was full of all sorts of grand benevolent schemes a short time before, and approved of Temperance Societies, and schools for the people,

yet now he was angry with his nephew for zealously co-operating in them. Perhaps he was displeased that men of influence in the place—great philanthropists with whom he had never had anything to do, should seem to court his nephew's acquaintance as they did, stranger though he was to them all ; it was a sort of tacit reproof to himself, and it annoyed him. But let the fault be where it would, the uncle and the nephew did not get on so comfortably together as they ought to have done, when a little circumstance seemed, for the moment, to be the one drop to the full cup of the uncle's displeasure, and made it overflow abundantly.

He had, immediately on his coming, made his nephew a present of a handsome gold watch and chain, and this the young man lost one day when he was bathing. It was a most distressing thing to him, and he could only surmise that some dexterous thief had stolen it from his clothes as they lay on the river's bank. He said nothing to his uncle of his loss, for so grieved was he to have failed, as he felt he had done, in winning his affection, that he was unwilling still further to displease him by this apparent carelessness. In his heart, Edward Grey regarded his uncle as a second father ; he would have died to have served him ; but he was not one of those who could make professions, and as his uncle seemed cold and distant, he determined quietly to go on fulfilling every duty, trusting to time and circumstances for making all straight between them.

The watch had been lost a week when it came to his uncle's knowledge, and that accidentally. A person came to the counting-house where they both were, and asked whether Mr. Edward Grey had not lost something. "My watch," said the young man, joyfully ; "a gold watch and chain ; I lost them a week ago."

His uncle was astonished and enraged : "Was the watch, then, of so little value that he could lose it and say nothing about it ?" In twenty different ways he could look at this affair and be made angry by it. He never had lost his own watch, and if he had, he should have been at some trouble to have found it, etc., etc.

Grey thought his uncle unreasonable in being thus angry without hearing him say one word in his own defence. It

seemed to him that there was much more said than the occasion warranted, and for that reason he was silent, and by this means his uncle did not know how much he had suffered, nor what pains he had, in truth, taken for the recovery of his loss.

The uncle was not only very angry, but very much grieved; in his anger he declared it was the last present that he ever would make him, and yet, the next moment, he threw him ten sovereigns, and told him to go and see if he could get back his watch for that money,—which he did not believe. Grey took the money thus ungraciously given, and went out with the man who said he was sent by the person who had found the watch.

Mr. Joseph Hilyard would have been no little astonished, could he have seen his nephew conducted to Mrs. Trevisham's cottage. It was a lovely afternoon, towards the close of summer; the little garden was as full of flowers as it could be, and jasmine and roses peeped in and clustered round the open parlour-window, and there sat Mrs. Trevisham in her mourning, and Kitty in a pretty pink dress and black silk apron; her lovely dark brown hair fastened up in its simple knot, and no single ornament about her, excepting her own dear smiles and affectionate eyes, looking just like a rose, and every bit as sweet. She told Edward Grey, who from the first moment he saw her was quite in a bewilderment of delight, how she and the servant-maid set off one morning, at five o'clock, to look for mushrooms in the meadows, because her mother was so fond of them; and how she found, under a sod, which seemed to have been cut out for the purpose, a gold watch and chain: she said she was so astonished that she did not know what to do, and as she thought that most likely some thief had hidden it there, she brought it away; that there was no name in it excepting the maker's, and that was a London name; that she and her mother considered what had better be done. They thought of advertising, and then it occurred to them that she might enquire of some of the watchmakers in the town, if the watch had ever been in their hands; that she did so, and soon found one who told her that he had sold it only a few weeks before to Mr. Hilyard, for his nephew, and that to him it belonged; and, in confirmation, he showed her an advertise-

ment in the paper, offering a reward for this very watch. And now here it was ; and it was impossible for Kitty to say what pleasure she had in restoring it to him.

The watch had become of ten times its former value as he received it from her hand. How he longed to kiss that hand ! He was the last man in the world to make fine speeches, but his countenance expressed something of what he felt. And then Mrs. Trevisham began to say that in former times she had known Mr. Hilyard ; that unfortunately there had been a lawsuit between her late husband and him, but that when she was young she had thought very highly of him. Grey said that his uncle was the best man living : that he had given him the watch, but that was nothing to his having taken him into the business, which was a great thing for him, who was poor, and the eldest of a large family. Mrs. Trevisham had evident pleasure in hearing anything to his advantage ; and greatly astonished the uncle would have been could he have heard all that his nephew said in his praise.

Kitty went on with her sewing, and the mother and he talked a great deal. He sat with the watch in his hand, and the wonder is, that he did not commit some extravagance or other, he felt so inconceivably happy. He said that the thief who had stolen the watch and hidden it there, never imagined the blessing he was conferring upon him. He did not explain his meaning ; but Mrs. Trevisham knew very well what he meant, and perhaps Kitty did, for she blushed as she went on with her sewing. He had offered, in his advertisement, ten pounds for the recovery of his watch, but he never thought of offering it either to the mother or daughter,—he would much more likely have offered his heart and his life ; however, he left a handsome present for the man who had fetched him, and who was a poor gardener with a large family ; and after he had taken tea with them, and walked in the little garden, and helped Kitty to tie up the carnations, he took his leave, promising to visit them again before long.

If his watch had been suddenly encircled with diamonds, it could not have been more precious. His uncle told him angrily, he hoped he would not lose it again. There was no danger of that.

This affair of the watch did not tend to a better understanding between uncle and nephew, and spite of all Edward Grey's assiduity in the business, he could not find the way into his uncle's affections.

"There is something cold about him," said Hilyard to himself; "a very good young man he is, there's no doubt of that—but I hate your good people: he is not the husband for my Kitty—after all, I shall be forced to have her myself;" and with that he laughed amazingly. He thought a deal about both Kitty and her mother, and one day he was at the trouble of going to the Ragged School, where he thought that he might have some talk with her. There she was, as cheerful as a lark, and as fresh as a flower, among the little ragged urchins, and the very expression of their faces, and the tones of their voices, were changed as they approached her. The master of the school had not words enough to praise her, and Kitty had no idea—not the least in the world!—that it was for her sake that this good man now visited the school, and left behind him a second donation.

"How odd it will be," thought Mrs. Trevisham, the day after Edward Grey had declared his passion, and been accepted, "for Kitty to be Mr. Hilyard's niece; I wonder what he will say, and whether he has forgotten those old times. Edward thinks he will be pleased, though he is so rich; but then Edward is young and in love, and I know that he once thought a deal about money."

It was Edward Grey's intention candidly to tell his uncle that he had fallen in love with a pretty, penniless girl, some day, when he was in a good humour; and it was his uncle's intention also to tell his nephew all about sweet Kitty Trevisham, some day when they were talking about schools for the people, and such things, for then he thought he should be able to interest him about the young teacher at the Ragged School. He fancied that he could draw a very pretty picture of her in the midst of her forlorn group, and this, he thought, considering his nephew's philanthropic propensities, would very likely make a deep impression upon him.

Summer and autumn were now over. Christmas was approaching. There had been, as one may say, a cessation

of hostilities for some time between uncle and nephew,—they were gradually and silently approaching each other in the spirit of a mutual good faith,—still neither of them had found the propitious moment for which they were waiting; and each was beginning to like the other so well, that they almost feared to make the momentous disclosure, lest it should throw them back into that state of alienation which had been so painful to both.

Edward was a frequent, though secret, visitor at Mrs. Trevisham's, and the long history of their former troubles was familiar to him. He also knew of the five years' Christmas present, and of all their fruitless conjectures as to who their unknown friend could be.

"You will dine with us, Edward, on Christmas-day?" said the mother: "I have no doubt but we shall have our usual dinner,—but at all events you will come?" Edward promised, and went home determined that this should be the last visit he would pay to this beloved family without his uncle's knowledge; for he would make an opportunity, if he did not find one, that very evening. The good uncle, too full of the delight of having sent to the widow a still more bountifully supplied hamper than usual, together with a letter, of which we shall speak anon, sat that evening in his easy house-coat and slippers by the parlour fire, the very image of good humour, as his nephew entered. The fire burned brightly, so did the lamp: tea came in, and the urn bubbled and hissed; and, though there were only two men to partake of this meal, which seems so peculiarly to require the presence of woman, yet it would have been difficult to find a better image of comfort than it presented.

Now, thought the nephew, I will tell him.

Now, thought the uncle, I will make the attack. Nevertheless the tea was taken in silence.

"Uncle," at length began the young man.

"My dear fellow," interrupted the uncle; "but go on—what were you going to say?"

"I beg your pardon, my dear sir! after you," said Edward, with a ceremonious manner very unusual to him.

"Well, my dear lad," began the uncle in good earnest, I may as well tell you at first as last—I have often wished to tell you—I want to see you married."

"Very strange," said the nephew, joyfully; "but I was just going to tell you that I am very much disposed to get married."

"What, the deuce! you have no girl in your eye, have you?" asked he, as the idea struck him that perhaps his nephew might be engaged to some girl at his native place.

"Yes I have," replied Edward.

"What the dickens could make you think of such a thing? How do I know who you have chosen—what right had you to choose for yourself?"

"Nobody had so great a right to choose for me as myself," said Edward, astonished.

"Sir," returned his uncle, raising himself in his chair and looking very angry, "I had chosen a wife for you before I had seen you. Don't interrupt me, sir," said he, seeing his nephew about to speak; "and I should not have sent for you if I had not wanted a husband for this good little girl. It was no merit of yours that made me adopt you, but my esteem and admiration for her; and I have made up my mind, sir, either you shall marry her, or she shall be my heir!" And with this the uncle crossed his legs, and threw himself back in his chair in a very determined and dogmatical manner.

"Very extraordinary," said the nephew, in a tone in which his wounded feeling was very evident, "but if that be the case, I must do the best for myself that I can: at the same time I must say that your ideas are arbitrary: I knew nothing of these conditions, and I came to you in good faith. I wished to love you as a father, and to serve you as an obedient son; and fathers do not commonly impose wives upon their sons; besides," added he, cheerfully, as a new idea struck him, "how do you know that the young lady you have done me the honour of selecting for me would like me?"

"She would," said the uncle; "she's a good girl; one just of your own sort; fond of Temperance Societies, and Ragged Schools, and such things. I don't know one like her."

"Well, sir," said the nephew, with half a smile on his lips, "if these be her recommendations, the girl that I wish

to make my wife loves Temperance Societies and Ragged Schools also."

"The devil take her!" said the uncle, in great wrath: for all at once he fancied it must be the daughter of some of those philanthropic people who had been so assiduously courting his nephew's acquaintance, and of whom he knew nothing, and taking up his bed-candlestick, he went to his room without another word.

The next morning, his uncle, in a much kinder voice than he expected, told him that he had made an engagement for him to dine out with him on Christmas-day, which was on the morrow, and therefore he begged that he would be in readiness at the hour which he named. Edward was engaged already,—he told his uncle so, and that in a voice of as much conciliation as possible. Another one drop to the full cup of his uncle's displeasure: and the cup as usual flowed over.

We said that a letter accompanied the hamper to Mrs. Trevisham's this year: it did so; and a letter, which occasioned some excitement and anxiety. It said that the friend who had had for some years the pleasure of sending this small present, proposed to eat the Christmas dinner with them on this occasion, and would also take the liberty of bringing a young friend with him. The hand-writing was unknown to them; it was a very different hand to that which had been familiar to Mrs. Trevisham in former days. Of course they would be very glad to see their kind, unknown friend, and his companion; yet still there was an undefinable anxiety in the bottom of their hearts as to who it would turn out to be. It was somebody who wished them well, no doubt; they only hoped that it would prove to be one from whom "they would *like* to receive a favour." We always feel anxious when a mystery, however small, is about to be solved. At all events they were glad that Edward Grey would be there; and, let the unknown friend turn out to be whoever he might, they agreed that Kitty's engagement to Edward Grey should be made known to him.

The unknown friend, who had sent much more than his usual supply on this occasion, proposed to be with them for dinner at five. Edward Grey, however, was there by two:

and great were the pains which he and Kitty took to make the little parlour look as pretty as possible, with its red-berried holly, ivy, and other evergreens. Though Mrs. Trevisham had only seventy pounds a-year, and the parlour was very small, yet this was one of the nicest little Christmas dinners that ever was set out or cooked. Mrs. Trevisham had paid a neighbour who had been cook in a great family to come in for the day ; and as to the table, it looked beautifully : there was a fine damask table-cloth on it with napkins as white as snow, and some handsome plate, which had belonged to the family in its better days, and bright glass and sparkling water, and hock and claret which had come among the good things in the last hamper. Bless me ! there was dinner enough for a dozen people, and yet the unknown guest could only expect four ! Mrs. Trevisham, however, expected five.

It grew dusk, and then dark : the blinds were drawn down : it was nearly five, and the hearts of Mrs. Trevisham and her daughter beat anxiously : so, no doubt, would Edward Grey's, had he seen his uncle driving along the road towards the house in a cab, and in a very bad humour, although he meant to make himself very agreeable to the two ladies.

The cab stopped at the little garden gate, and the house-door opened. It was a very undignified house ; one was obliged to go through the kitchen into the parlour, but there was no avoiding it ; so the little maid-servant stood with the door wide open, and Mrs. Trevisham saw that there was only *one* guest instead of *two*, and that he was rather a stout gentleman, buttoned up to the chin in a great coat with a shawl round his neck. She had not the least idea who he was. She felt considerably excited, and he, we must confess, was rather so himself ; and yet, as I have said twice before, he had fifteen hundred a-year, and he had paid for the dinner which he now came to eat.

Mrs. Trevisham stood at the parlour-door to receive him : he took off his hat in the kitchen, and stood with his uncovered and bald head before her. She saw at once who it was,—her own old lover, the adversary of her husband ; the uncle of her daughter's lover.

“ I feel myself rather in an awkward position, my dear

madam," he began. But no sooner had he uttered these words, than Edward Grey darted from the side of Kitty at the parlour fire, and seizing his hand, exclaimed, "God bless you, my dear uncle, is it you?"

"And is this you, Edward? Good heavens! how came you here?"

"I never was so glad in all my life," said Edward, helping his uncle off with his coat,—for now a great light began to dawn into his mind. "I declare I don't know how to express my pleasure; to think of meeting you under this roof, of all places in the world!"

"And to think of meeting *you* here!" returned the uncle. "You must excuse me, my dear madam," said he, turning to Mrs. Trevisham: and he then sat down in a large chair by the fire, feeling almost overcome. Mrs. Trevisham was hardly less so.

"My good lady," at length he said, "I feel now as if I had done very wrong; I ought not to have been so abrupt. I have done the whole thing clumsily."

Mrs. Trevisham said truly that it gave her extreme pleasure to find that Mr. Hilyard had been their friend for so many years.

It was now Kitty's turn to come forward; for she recognised in him the kind visitor of the Ragged School.

His eyes glistened as he spoke to her, and then Edward was at her side: an irresistible power compelled him to speak.

"Uncle," said he,—and as he spoke he took Kitty's hand—"we had made up our minds to be candid to-night, let the guest be who he might; and you, above all, have a right to know our secret. This is my affianced wife; let us have your blessing!"

The uncle took the two clasped hands in his, and pressed them warmly: but he said not a word.

Dinner was placed on the table. He still sat with their two hands in his: he wiped two great tears from his eyes, and then, in the cheerfulness voice possible, said that now they would go to dinner, for that he was desperately hungry, and after dinner they would talk about these things.

After dinner, when the dessert was on the table, how merry the uncle was at the expense of his nephew! And he



Lily Trevisham



told how he had “ by chance” met with the doctor, and heard about Kitty and the Ragged School, and how he thought first of all of making her an offer himself, and then he thought of sending for his nephew ; and then he warned Kitty that his nephew was a very obstinate young man, and that he would not be guided by his good old uncle, who meant so well by him. And then Edward had to tell him how it was the losing of his watch which had brought him acquainted with Kitty, and how happy they had been ever since with only one drawback, and that was, that his uncle was such a hasty-tempered positive man, who would not allow his nephew, who wished to be so dutiful to him, the right to choose a wife for himself ; and how this said wicked uncle had nearly broken his nephew’s heart by quarrelling with him about his intended wife.

There was a deal of laughter and merriment, though it was only a party of four ; nor was there a Christmas party, high or low, throughout England, where there was more true love and kind-heartedness to be found.

After this day the course of this true-love was so exceedingly smooth and sunshiny, that it certainly would have become monotonous, had not Mr. Joseph Hilyard insisted on a wedding by way of variety. So the wedding was held in May.

The young people lived in a small, but handsome, house, not far from the uncle’s large square one. Mrs. Trevisham still kept on the cottage, though she was not much there, for Kitty and her husband insisted on her being mostly with them. Very often, too, Mr. Hilyard was there ; and as he had of late grown so wise as not to care for what people might say when a good action was in question, he made up his mind to persuade the widow Trevisham to give up her cottage altogether, and remove to his large square house in the character of his wife. The wedding dinner and the Christmas dinner were eaten together, on the last 25th of December.

THE HUNT.

CHAPTER I.

HOW NIMBUS LIVED AMONG HIS TENANTS.

THE days of chivalry are over! Thank God for it! If there were ever any days in the world for whose termination the people of all nations might pray, they were the days of chivalry. With pretence of redressing wrongs, they were full of wrongs and outrages that make the blood freeze in reading of them. With the proud boast of honour, the sense of real honour was lost. With the gallant boast of courtesy to women, what violence and abductions of women then abounded! With crosses and Christian symbols emblazoned on their chivalrous shields, how every principle of christianity, peace, love, and mutual sympathy, were trodden under foot! All that remains to us from those times are the ruins of robbers' nests, and institutions which, for the good of society, ought to have been in ruins ages ago.

On the top of all hills all over Europe the grim vestiges of castles bear witness to the trade of the knights and Earls of the ages of chivalry. The Germans gave them the plain name that designates their true character—*Raub-Ritter*, robber knights. But not only in Germany, but over all Europe, did these strongholds of titled robbers abound. What crimes are linked to the memory of all those places! What dungeons are therein, some with holes only from the top, through which the victims were let down to perish of

the slow agonies of death! What racks and instruments of torture did they contain! What deep abysses with wheels armed with scythes, and with other horrors, remain yet, into which the wretched were plunged, and dashed and crashed, and crushed and carved to pieces! Behold thy monuments, O chivalry! and let no one wonder that we rejoice that thou art gone! But art thou gone? are there *no other* monuments left?

There are no occasions in which the features of ancient feudalism show more fully than in the atrocities of the Game Laws. George Sand, in the story of the Mauprats, has shewn to what a late period in France the savagery of the robber knights continued; and they who are not familiar with English rural life can have no conception how much of it remains still even in this country. It is amazing what a curse these Game Laws are in the midst of us. It is amazing how they turn the noblest hearts into flint—how they corrupt the blood of the best—how men, otherwise humane and enlightened, are very Neros and Caligulas where game is concerned; nay, even women, and young women, who have not only gone to a Christian Church almost every Sunday of their lives, and prayed that their trespasses might be forgiven as they forgive those who trespass against them, but have read whole wagon-loads of romances, and shed hogsheads of tender tears over them, and the sympathies they have awakened for virtue in distress,—even these, where game and poachers are concerned, are bitter as the north blast itself. It is not long since we heard a young lady lamenting over a tame fawn that a blood-hound of theirs had killed; and when asked whether they had not the dog sent away, she exclaimed, “Oh no, indeed! Why he is worth his weight in gold in catching poachers. He will seize a man by the throat, and pull him to the earth in a moment.”

In this amiable young lady’s eyes poachers were vermin; fawns only drew tears when their throats were torn by bloodhounds! Let the very memory of institutions perish that thus harden the hearts of the future mothers of Englishmen!

In the middle of England, lived, not long ago, a mighty hunter. He had various old estates and old houses. In person he was a very fine animal, tall, well-built, of hand-

some features, and surprising agility. His life, which from his boyhood had been spent very much amongst the woods and fields, had given him a vigour and elasticity like that of the ancient heroes, who were glorified and deified because they could knock everybody down. Neither had his education been neglected,—so far as money and colleges could educate him. He had been at Eton and Cambridge, and could quote Latin and talk poetry and sentiment to the ladies. All the ladies admired him to distraction, because he was so very handsome, and because, or although—we will not be uncharitable enough to say which—he ruined every country girl he came near. We don't say that he seduced them, for simple seduction was a mere trifle with him: he did as he liked, and regarded the gallows as only for vulgar fellows. As for our squire, or Nimrod, or Nimbus—for we must have a name for him, so let it be the last—as for Nimbus, he was a jolly fellow. He kept his horses and hounds and a brave table; he galloped over the whole country with half the country at his heels—gentlemen, farmers, all sorts of men mounted and unmounted. His father had left him plenty of money and plenty of acres, and he had plenty of strength and animal spirits, and he seemed resolved to live and spend. He ran riot, and indulged all the huge animal in every animal propensity. He ate, he drank, he sang, he swore, he got into debt—and then married himself out of it again. He married—what? a fool, a vulgar woman, a creature like himself? No! one of the most gentle and intellectual creatures in the country. Why did she marry him? because he was such a fine, handsome, jolly fellow, and because, as she afterwards said, she was bewitched.

Well! he broke her heart, just as he would break any thing else that he came near; just as he would break a hedge, a pale, a horse, or an empty bottle. Such women should not marry such men. Why do they?

Nimbus spent his whole life in pursuit of game of some kind. In the autumn and winter he was shooting and hunting; in the spring and summer he went into the North, trout and salmon fishing. He had his eye always on some woman to ruin, or his ears were regaled by his creatures with the reports of such; and all his spare time was spent in hunting weasels, polecats, and the like, with his keepers, and above

all in lying in wait for poachers. He had a nice band of pretty fellows who were always on the watch for these poachers, and with guns and stout little flails, that they could carry in their pockets, and one stroke of which would crack a man's skull as completely as a hammer would crack a walnut.

Such was Nimbus in his best days ; and, besides all these pursuits, he soldiered a little in the Yeomanry Cavalry. He did not like that much, for though the mess was good, and he got very drunk at it, there was no flogging ; and a great many fellows who, as suspected poachers, or as sturdy boxers that had thrashed him for insults to their sweethearts, he longed most sincerely to flog.

But withal Nimbus was pious. He went to church every Sunday, except when he was too drunk over night, and made all his servants, cottagers and tenants, go. He supported the church as a valuable institution that supported the state, which again made nobles and squires, magistrates, and good laws against poachers, encroachers, threateners of assaults, and the like.

He had, it would seem, a conscience of *some* kind—but of *what* we cannot pretend to tell. It must have been a very good one, for it never troubled him at all. He was always jolly, always on the best terms with the parson who was the most constant follower of his hounds, and the most merry guest at his table. Nimbus lived as many of his ancestors had lived before him. He was a wild fellow, the gentry said ; but then what a constitution, and what an estate ! Young gentlemen like him would have their way !

There were a good number of the young farmers on his property that were also zealous partisans of Nimbus, spite of his running over their corn and crashing down their hedges. As to these things, why, what squire did not do so ? but then it was not every squire who made his young tenants his pot companions, and liked to have them crashing over their hedges with him. These young men served in his troop of yeomanry, attended his hunts, defended his character at market and the public-house, and, as far as they durst, imitated him in his dress, his oaths, and his tally-hoing.

Now amongst these was George Wagstaff. George's

father had a farm within half a mile of the hall. It had been in the family three generations. George's father was a quiet man, who looked after his business, never went anywhere but to market and to church, and seldom came in the squire's way. When he did he took off his hat very respectfully, and answered any questions very simply, and there was an end of it. He passed for a very still, innocent sort of man, and his wife for a very good, superior, and sensible farmer's wife. Besides George they had one daughter, Jane, who had been at a boarding-school, and was said to be handsome. As for that, George was a tall, clever, and handsome fellow, and a great favourite of the squire's. He was a famous judge of horses, cattle, and dogs. He cut a fine figure in the troop, and was a zealous pursuer of poachers as well as of foxes. George's great friend was the only son of the miller of the Abbey Mill, Michael Corden. It was said that George paid his addresses to Betsy Corden, Michael's sister, who, next to his own sister, was said to be the handsomest girl in the parish.

Certain it was, that the Wagstaffs and Cordens were great friends. They were always going to and fro between each other's houses, which lay on each side of a great wood, called Raddig's Park, at about a mile distance. The Park stretched over some hundreds of acres, covering the summit of a hill that was seen far off into the country, and down which descended a wild woody glen, along which the stream ran that filled the Abbey mill-dam, and turned the Abbey mill.

The farmhouse of the Wagstaffs was on the flat of the same high country on which stood the hall, amongst its old woods and moss-grown walls, courts and out-buildings. The farm was a good farm, and called the Reeves Farm, and the old farmhouse the Reeves. It was a plain, but good, old-fashioned house, with capital out-buildings, and orchard and garden. It had a look of prosperity about it. There were ample sheds and fold-yards for cattle, with straw racks and turnip troughs for feeding cattle in the winter, and carts, wagons, and ploughs in abundance under cover. Huge barns bore testimony to the extent of the farm, and a steam-engine chimney showed, as did the various implements, that modern improvements were adopted there.

There was no lack of cattle, horses in the stable, or poultry in the yard. Mrs. Corden prided herself on her poultry, geese, turkeys, and the like ; on her pigs and calves. No one shewed at the country-town market finer ducks, geese, and pullets than she, or more numerous eggs and young pigeons.

On the other hand, the Cordens' mill was a piece of antiquity. It was one of those mills down in a most retired valley, buried in woods, which are so often found near monastic remains. It was supposed to have been the Abbey mill for seven hundred years. It had ground corn for generations of monks ; and when the monastery became abolished, and the property of the family which still inherited it, it continued to grind for them and all their tenants, as well as for a good part of the neighbourhood. High banks hung with ancient wood, and upland fields, farmed by the Cordens, shut it in. The large mill-dam above the house, with its thick screen of fruit trees, was a beautiful object, with its island, its flocks of geese and ducks and its water hens, that went to and fro amongst them with a flirting motion. Not far off, but quite hidden from the house or mill, stood the ruins of the ancient abbey : and fine ruins they were, now beautiful with hanging branches of wild roses, and with trees that had grown up in the midst of them, besides certain very ancient yews that stood in the cemetery.

The Cordens were a peculiarly quiet and hospitable family. They consisted of the same number as the Wagstaffs—father, mother, son, and daughter. As we have said, it was generally settled that there was to be an exchange of daughters between the families ; and that was all the change that was likely to take place till the elder generation went to their rest, and left the ground to their children and grand-children.

Between the Abbey mill and the Reeves the road lay through Raddig's Park. It was one of those deeply worn, uneven cart tracks that have been the work of centuries, and lay deep between steep banks, and overhung by trees. These banks were every spring covered with violets and primroses, and every summer thick with hanging wild flowers of sundry kinds. It was a cool and somewhat damp way ; but there was also a foot-path, giving many delicious

and picturesque views, and which led by a very short divergence to what was called the Abbot's Well, a most beautiful spring, issuing out from the foot of a steep bank, beneath an ancient crab-tree, whose ivied drapery hung in heavy masses from its boughs, and the crystal stream thence taking its way down the green grassy valley in rapid brilliancy. Hither people often came from great distances on account of the reputed virtue of the water; seats were cut in the bank of sandstone, equally agreeable to the weary invalid or lingering lovers.

The Wagstaffs and the Cordens were frequent passers along this path. By it the young Cordens walked to church, while the old ones drove in their taxed cart along the lower road. At a cross road on the hill they often fell in with the Wagstaffs, and walked on in company to the church, and back also to the Wagstaffs, where on Sunday the Cordens often stayed to spend the afternoon.

Everything seemed to promise that the families would be rooted down on their respective homesteads as firmly, for the next generation, as they had been for many past ones. Young George Wagstaff in particular was, as we have said, a great favourite of the squire's. He frequented his hunt, often shot with him, gave his judgment in the purchase of hunters, and could lend a hand to secure a batch of poachers. His mother, while she was glad that he should stand well with his landlord, was not, however, without her fears for his morals. Many a secret and solemn warning did she give him against the contagion of the squire's vices. Sensual license and the bottle she dreaded, and depicted in their effects ruin and misery. Above all, she intreated him never to bring the Squire there, or to give occasion, if possible, for his coming. Jane had been to school for some time after he had come to the estate, but everyone now had noticed her beauty, and the anxious mother had not omitted to observe the glances which the squire had of late more and more cast towards the pew where she sat with her friend and future sister-in-law, Betsy Corden. George treated her cautions as utterly needless. The squire, he said, knew very well that these girls were engaged to two of his best tenants, and was not such a fool as to entertain any dis honourable designs towards them.

But it was not long before the Squire rode into the yard at the Reeves to inquire for George. Once having done that, seemed to give occasion to do it again. The ice was broken, and he was riding that way accidentally, or coming on some business to George, in a manner and frequency that had never occurred before. In these visits, however, old William Wagstaff, or Mrs. Wagstaff, were assiduous to go out to him if George were not about, and it was rarely that Jane was visible. Once, however, the Squire came riding upon a Saturday, when all were gone to market except Jane, and now she was compelled to speak to him. Nimbus did not conceal his pleasure at seeing her; he sat on his horse at the door, and detained her there by many inquiries and some compliments. Jane, who knew his character, and most thoroughly despised it, made every possible attempt to withdraw into the house; but he put fresh questions to her, and fear of offending the landlord overruled her. From this time the attentions of Nimbus were more undisguised. He would come riding up, fling the bridle on his horse's neck, and march into the house without any ceremony; inquire, if she did not appear, and if he saw her would sit and talk for hours. These things did not fail to cause great uneasiness in the whole family. Jane Wagstaff was a young woman who was capable of creating a strong sentiment in the mind of any man, pure in the pure, passionate in the licentious. She was a frank and fresh country beauty: somewhat tall, of a fine growth, a pure and healthy complexion, a free and buoyant carriage, and a face full at once of sense, intelligence, and the most kind-hearted beauty. You saw at a glance that no care had ever dimmed those large dark yet laughing eyes, or had shaded that roseate and delicious cheek. She was like one of the summer mornings that broke over her native dwelling,—brilliant, dewy, fresh and fragrant as anything on earth could be. In her light and ardent spirit the most virtuous and high-toned sentiments prevailed, for she had sound sense, a fine nature, and had had an education above what many might consider necessary for her station. Such was not a woman likely to encourage the advances of a married libertine like Nimbus, but on the contrary to resent indignantly any approaches to such. She, therefore, kept as much as possible out of his way.

Her friend Betsy Corden was of a somewhat different temperament. She was timid, sensitive, and inclined to religious sentiment, that found much solace in poetry. She was as tall as Jane, but of a slenderer figure, and of a paler and thinner cast of features ; but there was an expression in her beautifully formed mouth, and in her clear blue eye, that was full of a fascinating beauty. The two damsels, who had grown up almost together from childhood, who had run as little girls across the neighbouring common to a day-school, and who had been at the same school at the county town, were more like sisters than friends. They were often together at each other's houses, and were continually passing to and fro together, or to see each other. The foot-path through Raddig's Park was trod by them almost daily in fair weather, and they would often stroll along it, accompanied by their brothers and lovers, listening to the music of the woodland birds, or seated by the Abbot's Well.

It was at this well, one summer evening, as they had loitered there alone till it was growing dark, that they were suddenly startled by the presence of the Squire. They rose hastily, returned his "Good evening," and were hurrying away. But Nimbus seized them familiarly by an arm each, and declared that he was not going to part with them in that manner. He endeavoured to persuade them to sit down again, and enter into conversation, asking them what they were afraid of ; but they firmly and respectfully excused themselves on account of the lateness of the evening, and with a significant look at each other, resolved not to separate, but to go on together to the Abbey Mill, which was near at hand. Nimbus accompanied them, making himself as agreeable as possible, and asking whether he could not see Miss Wagstaff home ; but Jane replied "that she was going to stay all night at the mill." The Squire on this took his leave with a familiar "Good night."

CHAPTER II.

OF NIMBUS AND HIS GREAT HUNTINGS.

FROM this day the young friends never ventured alone across Raddig's Park, nor even together in the evening; but in the daytime they found themselves more than once accosted suddenly by the Squire, who seemed to spring out of the ground, and was not got rid of without much difficulty. On one occasion, the two girls had reached the Abbot's Well, and had sat down there to talk over something of particular interest to them. It was on an autumn afternoon. As they parted, Betsy Corden had scarcely disappeared in the footpath, descending towards the mill, while Jane ascended up the little dell towards the higher and open ground, when she was startled by a rustling in the hazel bushes, and out stepped Nimbus, gun in hand. At sight of him, Jane replied hastily to his "How do you do?" and was passing briskly on, when he seized her by the arm, and endeavoured to detain her. Freeing herself from his grasp, by a sudden start, she took to her heels, and ran. She was as fleet of foot as strong of frame, and fear gave wings to her speed. But Nimbus sprang as fleetly after her, and to her horror she saw Black Beardall, the most ill-looking and ill-favoured of the Squire's keepers, step from beneath a tree, cross her path, and clasping her in his arms, exclaim, "Not so fast, my pretty bird. The squire is a sure hand at all kinds of game!" Jane gave a shriek of horror; but in the next instant she found herself in the arms of Nimbus, and the keeper, with a devilish leer, turned on his heel, and retired to a distance on his homeward path. The spirit of Jane Wagstaff, spite of her situation, rose proudly within her, and turning towards Nimbus, she said, boldly, "Sir, what is the meaning of this? Permit me to pass on."

"Anon," said Nimbus, endeavouring to imprint a kiss on her lips, which, however, she repelled by a very unceremo-

nious slap in the face, and an indignant, "No, sir!" Once more she endeavoured to rush past him down the valley ; but with a loud laugh, Nimbus caught her round the waist, and pointed down the path, where also stood another keeper, beneath the boughs of the wood. Alarm, of the most dreadful kind, now seized the unhappy girl. She assumed a stern and dignified air and tone, and insisted upon being allowed to pass on. But the only answer on the part of Nimbus, was to seize her more firmly. A desperate struggle ensued. Shriek after shriek, the terrified, yet self-possessed maiden sent forth, that it might reach some woodman, or some passer on the footpath. She defended herself with a vigour that evidently amazed her betrayer : and in a fortunate moment, espying a dog-whip in an outer pocket of his shooting-jacket, she plucked it forth, and his hat having fallen off in the struggle, she dealt him a blow with the heavy end on his temples, which made him relax his grasp, and reel backwards. In an instant she darted amongst the bushes, and plunged forward with a frantic fury. She heard the keepers call to each other, and knew that they would give chase. But she knew, too, that she was not so far from the lower road and the Abbey Mill, and that she might hope to reach one first, and then pretty certainly the other, before these fellows should have given the necessary assistance to their fallen master. On she went ; but soon found that one, at least, of the base keepers, was in pursuit of her. She heard his rapid crash through the underwood ; she heard his panting respiration as he ran, and conceiving that the noise of the parting boughs directed him in his chase of her, she took such a course as presented a clear opening, stooping and diving, as it were, beneath the thick branches, and beneath the dense hazels ; but, spite of her care, the rapid steps and hard breathing of her pursuer came ever nearer. She stood to consider what she should do ; and instinctively screening herself from view in the dense and soft verdure of a mass of willows, she saw Black Beardall rush past. It was evident that he was hurrying to intercept her escape to the mill. Quick as thought, therefore, she took a direction towards the footpath, reached it, dashed across it, and got into the underwood on the other side. Here, feeling that no pursuit would be dreamt

of, she more leisurely threaded her way, making a circuit, so as to reach the ruins of the Abbey below the mill. Once in sight of these hoary walls she felt herself comparatively safe, for within them lived the head labourer of the farm ; and springing over a low part of the wall from the wood, she rushed into the cottage, and closed the door behind her, locking and bolting it in the same instant, to the no little astonishment and terror of the labourer's wife. The good woman, if astonished at this sudden apparition and frantic action, was still more so when she contemplated more closely Jane Wagstaff's appearance. Her clothes torn to rags ; her face flushed and bleeding, from the lashing and scratching of the branches and briars of the wood, she sunk into a chair, and exclaiming, "Oh, my God !" fainted away. The poor woman, in the utmost terror, endeavoured to recall her to some consciousness, and was not long in succeeding. Jane bade her not to be terrified, but to keep the door fast, until they ascertained that the way was clear to the mill. This once certain, she bade the dame accompany her, and with a hurried flight she gained the miller's door, and darting into the house, created as much astonishment there as she had done in the labourer's cottage.

It may be imagined what consternation and what indignation this adventure occasioned, at both the mill and Reeves' farm. The parents, the brother, the lover, all equally felt the burning sense of the wrong inflicted ; but they felt, too, in what position they were placed with their landlord. Neither of the farmers was secure ; the mill was held on lease. The love of absolute power had made it a fixed rule with Nimbus not to grant any leases. These had fallen out ; and both Corden and Wagstaff were now merely yearly tenants. To resent such an outrage as it ought to be resented, would ensure an instant notice to quit their holdings. They were attached by the residence of generations to the spots. All their recollections and associations were bound up with them. To murmur even, was to ensure dismissal, and much persecution besides. What means of ruin and vengeance do the rich not possess !

And yet to be utterly silent on such an occasion was more than human nature could bear. The wronged spirit would rebel ; the wounded honour would swell the tortured

bosom. There was an unusual silence around the Abbey-mill and Reeves' farm. The Squire was seen nowhere for weeks abroad. There was a report of serious illness ; and then that he had left for London till spring.

It was not till the following June that Nimbus came to the hall. By that time it might be supposed that the passion of injury had subsided, and that prudence might dictate to the injured to be silent, though not quite satisfied. But in the interim neither the Wagstaffs nor the Cordens had restrained the expression of their feelings towards the guilty keepers ; and these had carefully forwarded exaggerated and envenomed statements regarding these matters, and others connected with the Wagstaffs and the Cordens, to their master in town. Rumours, moreover, had got abroad of the transaction in Raddig's Park ; it had assumed many and most distorted shapes, and the keepers had taken care to give to them such as were injurious to the reputation, not only of Jane Wagstaff, but of her friend Betsy Corden. It was said that both these young damsels had been accustomed to meet the Squire clandestinely in the wood, and that a discovery of these assignations had led to an encounter between the Squire and the young men, their lovers and brothers. All this tended to irritate and wound deeply every member of both families. The old people grieved, but counselled for prudence sake to take no notice. They were reluctant to be torn, at their time of life, out of their beloved habitations, and to see their children disinherited of all that the labours of their ancestors had made valuable and pleasant. But Jane Wagstaff resented deeply the unjust aspersions cast upon her by those who envied her beauty, or had been rejected by her ; while Betsy Corden, with her less energetic and more sensitive nature, suffered manifestly in her health. The two young men, on their parts, had lost much of their former gaiety, were much together, but far less in the society of their neighbours ; they rode together to market, and returned together early ; there was a spirit about them which, though it did not express itself in words, was felt, and it was one of brooding uneasiness.

Such was the state of things when George Wagstaff, riding in the deepest part of the deep, narrow lane, between the Abbey-mill and Reeves, met the Squire ; George, at sight

of him, gave a spur to his horse, and, riding up pretty briskly, touched his hat, and was going on. Nimbus, however, drew up, and hallooed out to George, "Hillo! Wagstaff; how now?" George stopped, and turned round his horse.

"What the d—l, man, is the meaning of this?" said the Squire, half offended and half gaily.

"Of what, sir?" asked George.

"Of what, sir!—why, sir, of riding past me, like a plaguy black thunderbolt; don't you know me, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I know you very well," added George.

"Come, no nonsense, Wagstaff; I am no stranger to what has been going on here down in the country, while I have been in town. You and others have been making very free with my name, and I just want to tell you at once, I'm not the man to put up with it. Let what's past be forgot; mind, I'm quite willing to that; come again to the hall, you and I should be friends for mutual interest, or, if not friends—take notice, then,—d— me you will find an infernal enemy in me, I can tell you. *Verbum sap*, Wagstaff; you know the proverb,—you have been to school."

"Sir," said George, assuming as cool and respectful a tone and manner as possible, "You know I was always glad to serve you in any way I could; but there *are* things that no honest man can bear; and my sister's reputation is of more consequence than any interest of mine."

"Pooh!—the d—l! what ails your sister? I tried to get a kiss from her,—is that such a sin? She should not be so devilish handsome—that was all. And, by the by, she paid me off for it; she nearly did for me, I can tell you. Well, there need be no more of that; your sister is safe enough for me, I am not at all inclined to fight the Amazons. Be wise, George, and look like yourself, and not like a regular bully. On Monday the troops assemble at M——."

"I shall be there," said George; "but allow me, sir, to say, that my sister's reputation has been made very free with all round the country, and it is not in human nature to sit easy under it."

"Then sit uneasy, and a murrain on you! Get your sister married; that cures all bruises."

George Wagstaff felt his blood mount and boil in his

veins ; he did not venture to reply, but touched his hat, and turning his horse, rode off.

On Sunday, the Wagstaffs and Cordens were at church ; but without the daughters. Nimbus cast looks of no friendly sort towards their pews. It was soon known to him that on his return to the country, these young ladies had left their respective homes—gone, it was said, to relations a long way off.

The next day, George Wagstaff and Michael Corden were riding towards M——, to join the yeomanry troop, in full regimentals, when Nimbus and some of the officers, his friends, overtook them. Nimbus gave them a scowl of no favourable augury, and his party galloped on. It was soon seen when they reached the parade-ground at M——, that Nimbus meant to make it a bitter drilling to the two young men. The very first time that he rode along the ranks he stopped and scrutinized their accoutrements minutely, and found fault with the state in which everything was. Their clothes had been badly kept, their carbines were rusty, their belts and the rest were slovenly. This was continued from day to day : no two men in the troop were finer or more adroit soldiers, rode better horses, or had their arms and accoutrements in nicer order ; but Nimbus was resolved to find fault, and to mortify them. Their horses were, according to him, rough as bears ; could never be half curried and cleaned,—they were too fine gentlemen to clean their horses, and should have brought servants with them. As he rode along the line, he cried, “ Back, Wagstaff ; keep in order ! ” and gave George a slap with the flat side of his sword on his chest, to make him draw back into true line, when he was already there. The two young men saw that they were marked out for persecution, and it was not long in reaching its height. One day, George Wagstaff was called out of the ranks by Major Nimbus, and reprimanded, before the whole troop, for negligence in his dress and duties ; he underwent the most malicious and insulting criticism, and took his place again in the ranks with a heart bursting with rage.

That very evening the two friends sent in their uniforms and accoutrements, and rode off home, having sent off during the day for their ordinary suits.

It was a fatal step ; but it was, perhaps, what the implacable Nimbus would have compelled them sooner or later. Their parents were struck with consternation when they saw them arrive, and heard what they had done.

" God help us !" they exclaimed ; " it's all over with us. The Squire will be like a raging fury. He'll ruin us ; and we must turn out from the old places where our families have lived so many generations. Alack ! alack ! "

" Let us turn out, then," said the young man. " The world is wide enough. Who would live to be a slave to a fellow like Nimbus ? Is he to insult our sisters, and to trample on us because we won't endure it ? No ! England is not so narrow yet."

Thus the young men spoke ; but their minds were dreadfully distressed, and the old people seemed struck dumb with grief. And swiftly came the evil. It came in the shape of letters from Nimbus, ordering the young men to quit his estate at once, or threatening to turn out the old people. It was a command, in fact, for the old people to turn their children out of their homes.

" Nay," said they, " that we never will. Let us go altogether."

But the young men said, " No ; we are young and able : we are not without means ; we will go and farm for ourselves."

That very day they rode off the ground at Reeves and the Abbey-mill farms, and took up their quarters in a distant village. The quietness with which all this was done seemed to enrage rather than to pacify Nimbus. It was as if what he meant for a severe punishment was treated with contempt. He heard, too, whispers in the country regarding it. He had terrified, it was said, the young women away by his licentiousness, and had now driven away the props and stays of the old people in their sons. He had heard, too, that these sons were about to establish themselves at spring in farms of their own. In the good war times, as they are called, the Cordens and Wagstaffs had saved money and bought land. On this they meant to live and to marry. But there was a weak spot in their plans, and their indefatigable enemy found it out. To complete the purchase

they had borrowed a certain portion of the money, and the fall of prices since the war had reduced the value of the land purchased to little more than the value of the borrowed capital. Still they hoped to be able to live upon it at no great charge ; but Nimbus knew their mortgagees, and prevailed on them to call in the money, offering to take it at a higher interest, or purchase the lands if they came to the hammer.

This was a dreadful and unexpected blow. The young men saw nothing but ruin before them. Autumn went on. Their parents, deprived of their active aid and counsel, gathered in their harvest with heavy hearts. Their children were banished from their presence, and the places of refuge, which they had imagined they had secured for them, were about to be wrested from them. The poor old people went on their way in sorrow which rapidly bowed them down.

It was during this melancholy time that their children could no longer refrain from coming to see, and to comfort them. Their sons after night-fall would ride over, and spend the evening till a late hour, keeping close within the closed shutters, and riding off as softly as possible near midnight. But this did not long escape Nimbus. His keepers observed these visits, and reported them ; and the old people had notice at Michaelmas to quit their holdings.

This final stroke broke down entirely the fortitude of the poor people. The old miller and the old farmer went together to implore that they might remain. If there had been a grain of real human flesh in the heart of Nimbus, it must have grieved with remorse at the sight of these two meek and respectable old men. They and their fathers had been the tenants of his and his wife's fathers for generations. They had been all their lives peaceful, industrious, and virtuous. They were as much portions of the estate as the house in which he lived, or the noble trees which embellished his park. Their pale and attenuated faces, their frames enfeebled by unwonted trouble, their white thin hair, would have pleaded in the bosom of Nero; but they produced no pang in that of Nimbus.

“ No! those upstart young scoundrels should never tread

his acres, and therefore they had better all pack off together."

Brutal wretch! As he saw the two venerable men proceed with unsteady steps along the grand avenue leading from his house, he only looked after them with a base triumph in his power of hunting them, and said,—

"A pretty kettle of fish they have made of it with their conceited sons, and their fine boarding-school daughters. We must teach them what comes of it."

This act raised the passions of the sons to a terrible degree. They vowed vengeance on the oppressor. They returned at once to their homes to assist and defend their parents. Their daughters also came back for the same purpose; but they never crossed the park on any occasion, and were never seen abroad, except with their brothers. They came duly to church, where, however, scarcely any old neighbours dare speak to them, and the rest of their time they were busy at home, making preparations by clearance of corn and domestic stores for the removal at spring. Never, however, was such a winter passed. They were involved in litigation in defence of their mortgaged purchases. They saw, as it were, the very ground sliding away from beneath their feet, and no home presenting itself where they could receive the grief-stricken old people. They saw their powerful foe preparing still to humble and to trample upon them. As the hunting season advanced, they found at first, to their surprise, but soon to their horror, that the course of the hunt was directed, by a malignant dexterity, across their farms. Black Beardall seemed to possess the art of unkenneling the fox in such places that he should take his course over the land of the Wagstaffs or the Cordens. In frosty mornings, after wet, half a hundred horsemen would come crashing over the hedges, and dashing along the springing wheat, tearing up the hope of the coming summer, and of that which should be valued to them on going out. Time after time this took place. Nimbus, like another Wild Huntsman, galloping with headlong speed, came on, shouting—"Yohicks! yohicks! Forwards! forwards!" The fury with which he ramped along, with all his horde of mounted savages clattering after him, making the earth and the young corn fly in all directions, and the yelling of the

hounds, presented a scene enough to make the outraged sufferers rush forth in frantic agony, to curse the whole demon route.

On more than one occasion the young men had rushed out, and cried shame on the reckless hunters; but it was like howling to the winds themselves. On went the ruthless rabble of destructionists, and the “Yohicks, yohicks!” was heard going on and on, like the voice of an exulting and indomitable fiend.

The whole scene would have reminded a German reader of Bürger’s description in the “Wild Huntsman;” and a wilder or more devil-inspired hunter than Nimbus never existed.

And hurry, hurry! on they went,
Through woods, o’er hills, down valleys low.

And wilder blasts the grim Earl blew,
And onward raged both foot and horse;
Now here, now there, see! riders flew,
Flung from their seats with fatal force.
Plunge! let them plunge to death and hell!
A prince’s sport that sweetens well.

The countryman, as that mad troop came like a hurricane over his fields, might well again have addressed their leader in the indignant words of another of Bürger’s lyrics:—

THE PEASANT.

Who art thou, Prince, that without ruth
Crushest me with thy chariot wheels,
Tramplest me with thy horse?

Who art thou, Prince, that in my flesh,
Thy friend, the bloodhound, unchastised,
May set his teeth and claws?

Who art thou, that through corn and holt
Drivest me with thy hurrying chase,
Panting as the wild game?

The corn thy followers trample down,
Which horse and hound and thou destroy—
That corn, thou Prince, is mine!

Thou dragg'st no harrow, guid'st no plough,
 Nor swelterest through the harvest day.—
 Mine, mine's the toil and bread!

Ha! *thou* a magistrate from God?
 God scatters blessings wide—thou robb'st:
 Tyrant, thou'rt not from God!

But in this case there was to be a still closer resemblance to the scenes which Bürger, the Burns of Germany, has written with a fire-brand.

The game cowered in the young corn green,
 And hoped in safety there to hide:
 And, lo! a countryman was seen,
 Who to the Earl in anguish cried,
 "Mercy! O noble Sir; oh spare
 The poor man's labour, sweat, and care!"

"Away, thou dog!" with curse and frown,
 The Earl did to the ploughman say;
 "Or quick my hounds shall tear thee down.
 On comrades, all!—away! away!
 And prove I wake no idle fears,
 Crack all your whips about his ears!"

'Twas said! 'twas done! the wild Earl flew
 O'er hedge, o'er ditch—from rear to van!
 'Twas crash and clang; whips cracked, horns blew,
 And forward dashed horse, hound, and man;—
 And horse and hound and man did tread
 To steaming mire, the people's bread!

Poor old Wagstaff, as he saw a similar rabble carrying similar destruction across his crops, could no longer restrain himself: he rushed out bare-headed; and, as the hunters were about to leap into the home-field that showed a noble expanse of springing wheat, he stood, and begged in God's name that they would spare that. It would have made almost any human being pause to see such an apparition: a tall, thin old man, pale as a ghost, his large grey eyes wildly gleaming from among the thickly cross-hatched wrinkles of his thin and withered face, and his long white hair flowing in the wind. To see him stand with uplifted hands, imploring them to turn aside to the next field, and

not ruin him out and out. "As God is in heaven!" exclaimed the poor old man: "As ye hope to be saved, gentlemen, spare me this once; ride where ye will over the grass lands, but—"

"Yohicks! Yo-ha-hoicks!" sung out the implacable Nimbush, pushing his horse over the fence at once; and as poor old Wagstaff stood and wrung his hands, and continued to exclaim, "Oh God! Oh God! there is no pity, no feeling," he rode up to him in a livid fury, and, shaking his whip over his head, exclaimed, "Villain! if I were not a magistrate I would flog you to death!"

The scene was so outrageous to every feeling of humanity, that the very hunters paused; there was a moment's halt—a silence, in which the old man, looking upon his landlord with a calm look, though every limb trembled as with ague, said gently, "May the Lord forgive you!" and turned away.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE GAME WHICH NIMBUS HUNTED FLED, AND PROSPERED EXCEEDINGLY.

ON went the hunt, and poor old Wagstaff reached his house and gave himself up to despair. Fathers and sons, wives and daughters, of the two devoted families, were sure that they had nothing to expect but what the fellest hate could dictate. Winter was here; spring was coming, in which they must quit; and they had to arrange with this fury of a landlord for improvements done, and the value of crops on the ground. How?

They were soon informed by the steward that no allowance would be made for improvements; their holding was of ancient date, and there were no stipulations on this head. All that they had done they had done voluntarily, and they must lose the cost of it. But the crops?

They must be valued. Yes. The steward would do that. They refused so flagrant a proposition, and claimed to appoint their man too, and he with the steward to decide on an umpire. No; it was refused, and there remained but a lawsuit to settle it. Poor people! a lawsuit with a wealthy landlord, and they themselves already ruined. But glaring and revolting as this fact was, the Squire did not trust his purse alone against a British jury. When there are wanted causes of prejudice, they are found. Towards spring, a fox-cover of high old gorse took fire near the Wagstaffs. It was one which the Squire was known to hold in the highest estimation. It burnt with fury, and carried its flames to a larch plantation, and consumed some acres of fine thriving young timber. It was immediately spread abroad that this was the work of the disaffected families. They were known to be in a state¹ of the bitterest hostility with the Squire; they were in hot dispute and deepest discontent regarding the valuation of the crops and the pending suit. There were

not wanting fellows—there are plenty on such occasions, and Black Beardall was very ready on this—to say that they had heard the Wagstaffs and Cordens vow vengeance on the Squire.

“The greatest of all scandal,” says Leigh Hunt, “is that the world is ready to believe scandal.” This charge, made without the slightest foundation, as it came to be well known, for the purpose of creating a serious prejudice against those doomed families, was accepted by the public with an avidity that was astonishing. Every one exclaimed, “Oh, dreadful! oh, the revengeful wretches! oh, poor Mr. Nimbus!” All the crimes and tyrannies of Nimbus were overlooked; nay, they seemed to be hugged and caressed as virtues, and the full vial of indignation of the virtuous public was poured on the victims of the most diabolical oppression. A short time showed that the burning of the fox-cover and plantation enabled Nimbus to carry out some changes that he contemplated in his park; but this told nothing in favour of the Wagstaffs; they had done it, and the Squire made the best of it.

Imagine the situation of the families. The time drew on for quitting their farms. Every one looked on them with real or affected aversion; they ceased to go to church, for no one would speak to them; they were then declared to be godless and infidels. The health of Mrs. Wagstaff gave way under all this hatred and calamity. The day came when the sale must take place. Farmers and country people flocked from near and far to examine and purchase; and in the midst of all this most comfortless confusion poor Mrs. Wagstaff was obliged to keep her bed, and the furniture of her room was to be excepted.

The house and farm were stripped, except of a few necessaries that they reserved for their accommodation in some other dwelling; and in this melancholy situation, and with the more melancholy prospect of losing Mrs. Wagstaff, they awaited the day of final removal.

Perhaps no days of a more gloomy and depressing nature ever passed over human beings than those. On the spot where they had grown up and enjoyed all the brightest seasons and associations of life, they were about to become aliens. They must depart to a day or they would be intruders.

Both farms had been taken long ago. There had been a perfect scramble for them. No one seemed to trouble himself about the character of or the tyranny of the landlord ; but, on the contrary, far higher rents were offered for them, and were given.

These facts made both the Wagstaffs and the Cordens seem to see what desirable places they had sacrificed through their opposition to Nimbus, and to feel more sensibly the blame of the country people. Amongst the young people, however, there was but one opinion—that they had done right, and that it was impossible to have lived under Nimbus with honour ; that it was better to make great sacrifices than to remain near him. But old Wagstaff, though he acknowledged that the Squire was a dreadful and wilful man, shook his head at the condition to which they were reduced ; and the old miller Corden was querulous and irritable about it. It was all the consequence of boarding-school education—it was being “too speritty.” Their forefathers had managed to live well enough there ;—but he did not reflect that their ancestors never had such a landlord to deal with. The ancestors of Nimbus’s wife, who had been the proprietors, had always been noble and generous men.

These things deeply pained the young people, and lay with heavy weight upon the dying Mrs. Wagstaff’s mind. Jane and George tended her with the utmost affection : it was all they had now to do ; and she would often gaze on them with tears, and wonder what would become of them when she was gone.

The great embarrassment now was, how in her reduced state they were to take her away. The doctor declared that to remove her would be her death, but to ask the incoming tenant, who was eager to take possession with a large family, for time, was useless ; it would have been a mortal offence to Nimbus. The day of quitting hurried on, and Mrs. Wagstaff lingered between life and death. There wanted now but two days, and go they must, if she died on the road. The son and daughter were in agonies, but Providence removed their perplexity ; that night, two days before Lady-day, Mrs. Wagstaff expired.

All now was hurry. Preparations were commenced at once for the funeral. The coffin arrived on the afternoon of

the next day, the day when the funeral must take place, for they must be off the premises before twelve o'clock on Lady-day itself. Wretched indeed was the funeral. A woman was gone who had lived respected and deserving respect by the neighbours, but no neighbours came to testify that respect by their presence. The terror of the lord of the soil kept all away. The procession set out;—it consisted only of the dejected widower, the deceased's son and daughter, and Michael and Betsy Corden. It was a day calculated to add yet deeper sadness to their hearts. Instead of a fine, dry, March day, there was a chilly dreary sleet abroad, and the shades of a dreary evening were falling as they reached the church-yard, where they had to wait for some time the arrival of the clergyman, who was dining at the hall, in the immediate vicinity of which the church stood. The sexton unlocked the gate to let in the procession; but no group of villagers collected according to wont to witness the solemn scene. There were poor in that village who had many and many a time received food and raiment at the Reeves, and comforting words from the deceased as well as from the living successors; but the ban was on these families, and though these poor might send up a prayer in the secret of their cottages, they dared not to appear here. There were only some boys, who, in the dusk of this cold damp evening, thrust their hands into their pockets, and seemed rather waiting to warm themselves by helping to fill in the grave than for anything else. At length the rector came and hastily despatched the ceremony: beckoning to George, when he approached to pay the fees, to give them to the clerk, and departing without a word to old neighbours, at whose table he had been many a time right jovial, he took a short cut to the hall again, by slipping over the wall and dropping into the adjoining shrubbery.

The mourners, with hearts out of which all feelings of human comfort and love of life were thoroughly crushed, wounded in their self respect, feeling themselves hated and despised—abandoned by all the world, and torn up root and branch from every spot and thing that their whole existence had taught them to cherish,—withdrew in silence, and the sexton closed and locked the gate behind them without one final word of farewell.

That night the respective families made haste, loaded their few goods, and departed before daylight, leaving a farm-servant to give up the keys to the incomer. Not a soul came to take leave of them ; and they departed from the place of their families' long settlement without one token of kindness. Such is the power of the petty rural tyrant over the fortunes, the fears, and even the virtues of the people. Yet let not human nature be too severely judged: on the neighbouring heath, where no prying eye could well lurk, for all was open, bleak, and dark, as the two carts which carried the goods of the late tenants of Reeves farm and of the Abbey mill went slowly on their way, followed by their owners in a covered tax-cart, a voice accosted them, and the vehicles made a halt: several dark figures advanced to that containing the fugitives. They were old neighbours, who dared not show what they felt near home, and who might encounter ruin if their present interview were known.

It was a melancholy pleasure to the persecuted group to receive at the last moment this evidence that all had not abandoned or entirely misjudged them. There were tears, prayers, and familiar shakes of the hand in abundance, and the friendly neighbours disappeared in the darkness, and the travellers again went on their way.

What became of the Cordens and the Wagstaffs it was long before any one knew. In the autumn of that year, those riots which attended the rejection of the Reform Bill by the Lords took place, in which, at Bristol and Nottingham, such extensive burnings were perpetrated. At the latter place, the mob which destroyed the castle, and attempted, and in part effected, other outrages, was so well organised, that they were supposed to be under the guidance of superior minds. They manifested, as such mobs do, a desire to execute justice, where they thought it had been neglected by the proper authorities, and vengeance, where the offenders against humanity had escaped punishment through their wealth or position. The Duke of Newcastle had incurred their resentment by the profligacy of his political doctrine of "doing what he liked with his own;" but it was also said that he had shamefully broken faith with a lady, a

tenant of the castle, who in consequence had quitted it, and as it lay thus empty, the mob decreed its fall.

Never was there a more magnificent bonfire. The crowd, led on by evidently able leaders, advanced to the work of destruction in admirable order. Having forced their way in at the gates, and broken in the doors of the castle, they proceeded to tear down the cedar wainscotting, and piled it in heaps in each room. They then set fire to it, and rending down the ancient tapestry, they wrapped it round them as robes, and thus danced around their fires. Over the whole town the great building soon cast the splendour of its flames and the odour of its burning cedar, and amid the darkness of night, and the incessant fall of drenching rain, that stupendous blaze arose, and flickered in the thick vapoury sky, and innumerable sparks rising like a gigantic fiery tree, rose over the blazing fabric, that aloft on its rock displayed its catastrophe to the whole country round for scores of miles.

But still as the whole huge pile appeared one brilliant mass of flame, thousands of spectators saw, as it were, dark figures still dancing around intense fires. Some declared that they were only curling waving columns of smoke; others protested that they were exulting fiends; but they were men and women, intoxicated with the excitement of the scene, who continued to dance till there was no longer any retreat by the staircase, and effecting their escape only by issuing from the windows, and descending by the indentures of the quoinstones. We speak from facts, derived from the confessions of the parties themselves.

There was a magistrate in that neighbourhood, who was said to have committed a capital crime some time before. It was said that the weight of his purse had purchased his exemption from the punishment decreed by the laws; although it was said that at the very next assizes three poor men were hanged for the commission of a crime of the very same kind. The mob vowed to execute the law upon this rich man, who had escaped by his riches. They vowed also to march into his distant neighbourhood, and punish Nimbus for the tyrannies which we have here recorded. There were heard voices in the throng which urged these measures, and urged them eloquently.

There were seen two young men, of tall figures and commanding features, but stamped with an indelible and as it were a mortal melancholy, who marshalled the mob, and directed its movements ; leading them on their march from one point of attack to another, by the charm of simultaneous singing. Who were they ? It was said that numbers recognized them ; and that they were no other than George Wagstaff and Michael Corden ! It was believed that, resolved to take a signal vengeance on Nimbus for their cruel ruin, they had lain concealed to every one, watching for any opportunity, than which no greater could offer than this : that their object was first to gratify the mob, in their now more immediate objects of vengeance, and then to lead them to the estate of this tyrant. It was said, that for this purpose they addressed the assembled tens of thousands in the forest by night, and there worked them into such a pitch of fury by the recital of their sufferings, that they desired to be led away at once to the destruction of Nimbus Hall. But that night the castle was doomed to fall ; and the sensation which this occasioned called forth the next day the slumbering powers of both town and country. The mob fled before the military, and Nimbus escaped his doom.

Had no real intelligence of the further fortunes of the Wagstaffs and the Cordens reached their native neighbourhood, this belief would have become a fixed faith. We can well believe, that in the breasts of these two young men many a bitter thought brooded and rankled against their oppressor. It was not to be supposed that they could have been so insulted, so injured, so torn up from every place and thing, and person that they held dear, so covered with calumny and ruin, without ideas of vengeance kindling in their excited brains, and sentiments of hatred to this tyrant swelling their indignant breasts. But over all these it will be seen that they triumphed ; and though, when Curly Hearson and his fellows were hanged at Nottingham, as ringleaders of the rioters, it was said greater and abler ones had escaped, we can satisfactorily show that they were not these young men.

When the two fugitive families were crossing the heath, on the night of their departure, they were directing their

course to the neighbourhood of a great iron-foundry, in which the Wagstaffs had a relative as the chief clerk. This worthy man, the nephew of old Mrs. Wagstaff, and the cousin, therefore, of George and Jane, had sympathised unflinchingly with them in all their troubles, and had offered them a cottage which he had lately purchased, as a temporary abode, till they finally settled themselves. Hither they were bound; but after their friends had parted with them on the heath, they fell into conversation on their future prospects, and George suddenly proposing to leave all their troubles and the lawsuits—out of which they would probably gain nothing but farther loss, wrong, and aspersion—and go to America, the project was universally assented to, as if the same views had already been occupying each individual mind. They therefore stayed only a day with their relative; for a ship being on the point of sailing from Liverpool to New York, they hastened thither, leaving their relative to dispose of their few articles of furniture at his convenience.

This worthy man had it, therefore, in his power to state that it was impossible for George Wagstaff and Michael Corden to have been at Nottingham at the time of the riots, having proof that they embarked for America within a week of their quitting their farms, and having maintained a correspondence with them ever since, by which their whole history was familiar to him. Enough of this history may be known from a letter which, ten years after their emigration, George Wagstaff wrote to this cousin; for in this letter the writer seemed led by the completion of a term of ten years to take a review of the past. With this letter our narrative will conclude:—

“Corden’s Mills, Wagstaff Township,
“Banks of the Wabash, Indiana,
“October, 1842.”

“DEAR JOHN,—Betsy and I have been talking over with the children about us the wonderful changes of the last ten years. Yes: ten years! They are gone, and luckily we are here,—free, wealthy, happy, and I hope useful and thankful. But, feeling all this, and the gratitude of it, we could not help thinking a deal about you, and your truth and constant loving-kindness; and Betsy said, ‘Do, George, write

to John, and tell him what we feel.' So here I am writing; and again I say, what a wonderful change in ten years!

"When I look out on the scene that lies before my window, and see this beautiful valley, with the beautiful river running along it, the sloping uplands backed by the distant hills, and all the signs of a busy and happy population, in good houses, mills, and rich cultivation, and reflect that we have here two thousand acres of our own, meadows, pasture, arable, and woodland, how can I help looking backward with wonder to the time when we were driven as it were with ignominy from the land of our birth! Everything seemed to conspire to drive us out of it. We can now thank God for it, for we believe that it was His work. From the moment we set foot on these shores, the spell of misfortune seemed to be loosed from our backs; all was open, easy, and even inviting us to prosperity. We met, in New York, with an old countryman from Selston, who told us of this property to be sold, and Michael and I came at once with him, and were enraptured at the sight of the spot. Wood, water, fertile fields, and beautiful scenery—what could we desire more? The remnant of our property sufficed to pay for it, and we soon found ourselves as well off as Nimbus himself. Everything has prospered. My Betsy, whose worth I go on every day learning, has given me four dear children. Jane and Michael have six, and are as happy as virtue and plenty can make people. We carry on considerable concerns besides our farms: Michael and I are partners in everything. We have flour-mills and saw-mills: we are both magistrates, and I am, also, colonel of the district militia. We can live without fear of the vengeance of landlords: we can shoot over a finer range of country than Nimbus ever knew. The old people are all living, and enjoy a hearty old age. The only drawback is that my mother did not live to see her children and grand-children thus happily located, with a scope for a dozen generations of Cordens and Wagstaffs.

"Who could submit to farm in England, at the mercy of a haughty landlord, that could here for a moderate sum possess a much larger farm? It does seem to us wonderful how Englishmen endure what they do. A man for a decent farm must sell his soul politically; he must go up to the

hustings, and vote for that which shall degrade and impoverish him. He must then keep his landlord's game, and sow corn for a rabble of hunters to gallop over ; and, worst of all, pretends that this galloping over does his crops good. Such is the servility which tyranny engenders. When I have heard farmers asserting that galloping over their wheat was good for it, I have asked them why, then, they did not gallop over it every day themselves ? But such questions, even, are cruel, for our own fate was a proof of the sure result of any attempts at independence of action or opinion. Oh, that dark time ! There was a day when, if ever Satan threw temptation in a man's way, he threw it in mine. It was during our last melancholy autumn. My soul was bitter within me from accumulated injuries and insults. Ruin stared me in the face ; my enemy was triumphant over me, and the whole world smiled on him in the midst of his oppression. In this mood I wandered in Raddig's Park. The damp tawny leaves lay thick under foot, the many-coloured foliage told of the decaying year. I knew that it was the last year that I or mine should breathe there. While a curse hung on my tongue against the sensual and base man of power—behold ! there he lay sleeping on the heathery ground, wearied, it was evident, with his morning sporting. He was all alone ; there was not even a dog. Probably the keeper had led them home ; but there stood his gun, reared against a tree. It was close to my hand ; it seemed to solicit my grasp. I threw one glance on the sleeping monster ; one shot, and who would be the wiser ? But one, and his career and his crimes would be at an end. But it needed only one reflection. The innocence of my own soul was worth to me a thousand vengeances. I turned, and walked calmly away. Never do my thoughts rise up to God, without blessing Him for the mercy of that moment. For the strength from heaven, and the light of God's spirit, which had streamed from a mother's heart upon mine. And that mother's treatment—but there again was needed her own holy temper !

" Good bye, John ; come and finish your days here. When from this peace and amplitude we look over the waters to you, how marvellous does it seem that you like to crowd upon and devour each other in your little aristocratic

island, and do not, even while you remain there, attempt to deliver yourselves from the despotism of the Game Laws. For them your gentlemen are brutalised ; your farmers are degraded into serfs and sycophants ; your keepers are made savages and murderers ; and your poor men, metamorphosed into poachers, are knocked on the head with pocket flails, and are imprisoned and transported. The most miserable Indian that roams these forests, and brings down with his rifle at his pleasure the deer, the turkey, or the prairie hen, would look with scorn on free-born Englishmen who could submit to such ignominy. Good bye, dear John ; when you think you have "c'erket" long enough, come hither, and we will have a shooting together through the woods, which fear no Nimbus, and know no Game Laws.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"GEORGE WAGSTAFF."

THE TWO SQUIRES.

IT was on a pleasant May morning that a gallant gentleman, Dauncey Dauncey, Esq., rode forth from his ancestral hall, and across his noble ancestral estate, on a steed which, now that horseflesh, like other commodities, has acquired a tolerable price, might, by a knowing eye, be valued at some few hundred pounds. He was followed only by one servant, mounted, as an ignorant spectator might deem, much better than his master, having the said master's great coat duly belted at his back, and beneath him a capacious pair of saddle-bags,—thus indicating, according to the simple mode of the times, before carriages were so common, or ever M'Adam was born for the civilization of roads, that he was bound on a considerable journey. Mr. Dauncey was, indeed, “a squire of high degree;” not such an one as might possibly be found even in this day, and in more places than one, did we deem the quest profitable, who have indeed ceased “to handle the plough or the goad,” but “whose talk is of bullocks;” but he might have presented a goodly image of a knight of the golden age of chivalry,—as handsome in person, as gallant in bearing, as bold in heart, as Arthur Pendragon himself,—had it not been that, although full of lofty speculations and generous thoughts, he had no decided relish for the shock of horses, the crash of spears, or the shouting of idle people; but had much rather see a young grove of trees flourishing in the sunshine, horses bearing home the harvest, or a group of merry peasants dancing under an oak. An education of that solid and venerable splendour which then

only bore the name of learning, and which then, indeed, was seldom acquired except by those ambitious of climbing high in church or state, had opened and elicited the full strength and glow of a truly noble spirit, crowning it with a dignity disdainful of everything mean, and touching it with aspiration after a thousand good deeds to his fellow-men.

He rode on, past many a substantial farm-house and snug cottage, from which came forth venerable age, manly and womanly youth, and troops of smiling children, with bows and curtsies, and “God speed you, sir!” and eyes that followed, till the next turn of the road hid the beloved master, who was leaving them for the mighty space of a few months. He rode on, over the open heath, fragrant with the golden flowered furze; down the deep lane overhung with hawthorn, bending its boughs beneath their loads of snowy bloom; through woods where the clear waters ran sparkling across his path, and the sun cast his flickering beams on the stems of gigantic oaks, now clad in their fresh amber foliage and filled with a clamour of rejoicing birds. He had a heart to feel all the beauty and gladness around him; and, as he issued from beneath the covert of the trees, on the brow of the next hill, and cast back his gaze on the wide, wooded, and beautiful track, all his own, and upon the fine old mansion, showing its manifold gables and peaked roofs in the midst, he inwardly exclaimed,—“Thanks be to Him who has meted me so goodly a portion! But one thing wantest thou, fair scene, to match thee with the fairest throughout merry England; and it shall go hard but this crowning charm is thine ere another winter darken thy fields, and brighten the happy hearths within thee.” He turned his horse and rode smartly on,—and God’s blessing go with him, while we turn back and see, as the country phrase has it, whom he left behind to “keep the house warm.”

A strange fellow was there, truly—a strange companion for such a gentleman,—for he was, in a great degree, a companion. When we say, however, that they were two only sons, born heirs to two adjoining estates, who in boyhood had played together, and rambled through the woods together, together had been sent to school, and thence to college, there is explanation enough of the strangeness of their after acquaintance; yet two more differing mortals

never were born. Dixon, this said Dixon, quondam playmate, schoolmate, and now *luogo-tenente* of Dauncey Dauncey, was a tall, thin, wither-away fellow, of six feet two, with legs that occupied the centre of his oscillating boots much after the manner of a spoon in a jug. His complexion was tawny ; his hair and eyes black, his body lean, and tough to the very eye ; his skin had a dry and leathery look ; his arms hanging long and lank by his sides. Altogether he had the air of a tall, slim tree, that, transplanted by some one ambitious of a ready-made grove about his new-built house, stands wavering, though propped, half alive and half dead, and from year to year neither perishes nor grows. In word, action, and design, he was slow and drawling ; yet ever and anon, a sudden flash of something like wit would burst out of him : and there was the continual gleam of a placid smile about his eyes, that struck people with wonder, and made them think there was more in him than they had given him credit for. He was one of those odd anomalies—those queer mixtures of humanity, that you never seem entirely to understand ;—a creature in which there appeared an easy strife between the flat and the sharp, the fool and the knave. When about to be pronounced a dupe, out would come some evidence of cunning, which occasioned the expression—“He is no fool, neither ;” when about to be scorned for his heartlessness and want of principle, some burst of kindness and good nature struck wonder dumb. The fact was, he had not enough wit to take care of himself, but sufficient wherewithal to harm any body else seriously. At school the only things he was known to learn were some odds-and-ends of Latin, and a connoisseurship in cats and rabbits ; at the University he acquired a great proficiency in horses and their pedigrees, and made many valuable acquaintances with grooms, jockeys, and anglers ; and if he was not expelled his college, it was not because he was very tender of its rules or its reputation. Thence, however, he was suddenly called by the death of his father ; and before Dauncey returned home, had suffered himself to be completely gulled, in the most marvellous manner, out of all his property by sharpers. To this time it is current in that part of the country, that, on one rainy day, in a village public-house, he lost three thousand pounds and two good

farms : the first by a wager on two drops of rain running down the window, the second by a bet on two bents drawn out of a hayrick, and the third by a race between two beetles. To any other man it would have been subject of madness or suicide ; to him it scarcely appeared that of a reflection ; his sleep was as sound, his shootings and anglings as regular, his jokes as frequent as ever, and such a one as the following food for mirth and raillery for a mouth. While shooting one day, his dogs turned out a hedge-hog, which he put in one pocket and his game in the other, that the man who emptied the last, on his return, might confidently plunge his hand into the second, and wound it on the spires of the urchin. The scheme took full effect in presence of the assembled servants'-hall, and was set down for a *chef-d'œuvre* of wit.

Such was the occupier of Dauncey's house in his absence, which was to be of several months, but, to Dixon's surprise, was scarcely of one ; for, coming in one evening, who should he see but Dauncey sitting in his usual seat—his father's carved and high-backed chair,—dusty, weary, and melancholy.

"Heigh, and how now!" cried Dixon. There was for a time no answer ; but at length, Dixon's slow, yet unfailing pertinacity succeeded.

"A fool, Dixon, a fool!—I have only been playing the fool a little!"

"Oho," quoth Dixon, rubbing his hands with glee ; his tawny features brightening up, his mouth opening with a grin almost from ear to ear, as he trailed his chair after him, and took his seat by Dauncey : "Oho, a joke ! Come, let us have it!"

The countenance and manner of Dauncey showed plainly enough that it was anything but a joke ; yet, knowing the futility of attempting resistance to the eternal battering-ram of Dixon's curiosity, he gave way at once.

"If I must then confess my own folly, I thought, the other day, that I had found a lady worthy of this mansion and of your valuable friendship, Mr. Dixon."

"Oho, oho," quoth Dixon, "I have it, I have it ; and so she wouldn't have you, eh?"

"Not exactly so," replied Dauncey.

"Not so! how then? how then? Hast thou lost a good wife by some of thy scrupulous nonsense?"

"Perhaps so," said Dauncey; "but let this suffice—she would and she would not; I might, and I could not."

"Come, now," said Dixon, "this is just what I like; a good riddle, a good joke! I told thee it was a good joke, didn't I? But out with it, I pray thee, for I can bear it no longer."

"Nor I either," rejoined Dauncey; "so, as you are anxious for a silly story, here it is. I found in my journey a lady who, for beauty and majesty of person, is, in my opinion, worthy of a throne—a tall, superb, and resplendent woman, in whose presence the common race of ladies appear of a dim, dwarfed, and secondary stamp. If I was surprised and delighted at her person, I was not less astonished at the vigour and splendour of her mind. Her ideas seemed to flow from a source of crystal transparency, and, like the rays of the sun, to carry light and life with them into the world. I think I am not deficient in information; but I know not by what means she has grasped acquirements, and amassed knowledge, that have cost me years of weary days and nights, and the aid of the greatest masters: and yet, her years, her looks, the buoyancy of her mind, the courtly elegance of her manners, render it impossible that she can have passed through much toil and task-work. I own to you that I thought such a woman would be the crowning glory of my existence: and that woman might be mine, and you ask me why she is not. The magnificent creature is marred, dimmed, debased, and rendered utterly worthless in my view, by two mental flaws—a thirst, a domineering thirst for power, and a sordid ambition of wealth, though already in possession of riches. My course was smooth enough, almost stranger as I was,—the fact of my presuming to her hand was sufficient attestation of my gentility; but scarcely had I congratulated myself on the brilliancy of my prospects, when I received an unexpected dart. 'You have a large landed estate, Mr. Dauncey, have you not? I love land, I am a perfect agriculturist in spirit, and shall stipulate with you for a good deal of management in rural affairs.' There was not much in the words, Dixon, but there was a some-

thing about the tone and spirit of them that I liked not : my amatory thermometer fell at least twenty degrees. I replied, that I was not ambitious of winning her favour by my *lands*, but by those personal and mental qualities which were more important, and of which she could form her own judgment. Land enough I had, it was true, for a modest and comfortable establishment. Dixon, I never saw the arch-fiend, flinging off the shape and lineaments of an angel of light, start up in all the malignant fearfulness of his infernality, but I have seen something like it, and my ears tingle at this moment with the shrill echo of the words, ‘ Modest and comfortable ! modest and comfortable ! Paltry, pitiful consolations of a base-born spirit ! Does any one hear those grovelling sentiments, and doubt the speaker to be a fool, knave, or poverty-stricken caitiff ? ’ I replied not, and I am here.

“ And is this all ? ” cried Dixon, in unaffected amazement ; “ and is this all ? Why, Dauncey, justly did she interpret thee ; for thou art a greater fool than I suspected thee to be. What ! throw up an empress of a woman in a huff, because she loves power and splendour, and a little farming to boot ! Go to ; didst thou not know she was a woman ? and immensely too good for thee is she ; and now I think of it, I am convinced that she would suit me to a tittle .”

If Dixon was amazed at Dauncey, Dauncey was not the less so at this speech. Raising his head for the first time, he looked full upon his lengthy friend, first with a broad stare of astonishment, then with a kindling smile, and, last of all, broke out into a laugh that rung through the house and bent him double again. “ By Jove, Dixon, my vexation is gone, I know not how. I am amazed at thy spirit. Thou win the lady—the proud lady, whose soul is set, no doubt, on a style of living befitting a dukedom, while thou hast lost every doit of thy fortune ! The great managing lady suit thee, who has not a sod left the size of thy shoe ! ” And he laughed again louder than before, while Dixon sat by, looking quietly at him, and every now and then uttering a low note of cachinnation, more in amazement at his friend’s immoderate mirth than at any mirth of his own.

“ If thou art in earnest, however,” said Dauncey, “ I advise thee to lose no time. And so be it that thou pledgest

thy word to tell no lies, and to do nothing unworthy a man of honour in the case, I wish thee success, and my purse and equipage are equally at thy service."

If Dauncey thought Dixon was but in joke he was never more mistaken. At the word, up rose the man, with unusual activity; began, *instanter*, to put things in a train; and actually, the next morning, was on his way, a "jolly wooer," with one servant behind him, as Dauncey had gone before. Many a time did Dauncey, as he sat in his hall, or rode solitarily over his estate, in the course of the few following weeks, break out afresh in laughter at Dixon's chivalrous speech, and at the idea of what figure he might be cutting at the moment; but let those imagine his utter and astounding amazement who can, when, in less than a month, he actually beheld a carriage drive up to his door, and out of it step the identical pair!

We permitted Dauncey to go on his pilgrimage alone, in a vain confidence that he would take care of himself, but we must not suffer Dixon so to depart, being too bad to be trusted, and too good to be lost sight of. As he rode slowly, then, on his way, hatching in his head the modes and probabilities of his enterprise, he arrived, in the first place, at the politic conclusion, that, although bound to speak the truth, and, peradventure, nothing but the truth, yet he was under no moral obligation to tell all the truth. In the second place, conning over the name, parentage, and place of abode of his Dulcinea, he stumbled upon the auspicious discovery that her father was no other than an old fellow-collegian of his father's, whose acquaintance had had a sort of keeping up by a casual meeting in London, and by a message of compliments passed through the mouth of some squire-errant once or twice afterwards. Therefore, in the third place, animated by these propitious circumstances, he put spurs to his horse, and was soon bowing his long back in the presence of the lady and her aged father, the sole relics of an ancient family. It was introduction enough that the old gentleman recognised him as Mr. Dixon of Dixonholme, and gave him a most cordial old English welcome, which Dixon assured him he should feel the highest satisfaction in having the opportunity of returning at his own house,—not deeming it needful, by any means, to disturb the good man's

tranquillity by informing him that the son of his friend had no house, that Dixenholme was already, like the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, "gone from him." It was recommendation enough that Dixon was discovered to be a prince in the art of angling, in which the old gentleman was, at least, an enthusiast: the visit, therefore, spun out,—from day to day they angled, and from eve to eve they talked of angling. The daughter looked but grimly upon the personal graces of Dixon, who, for his part, made no further attempts to propitiate her good will, than by his ordinary habits of gallantry, and by a lavish projection of those Latin fragments picked up at school, and ever since in diurna requisition, to impress a befitting reverence upon squire and clown, and to give a classical grace to his confabulations with the parson, in whose ears they were become like so many alarums, sounded till they had ceased to be heard. He did not fail, however, to drop, on one occasion, at dinner, a short lamentation, addressed to the worthy old gentleman, on the want of a good wife, who would have both will and ability to take entirely from his shoulders the irksome charge of purse, scrip, and command, and leave him to the enjoyment of the patient mysteries of the field, for which he felt himself best qualified. The hint was not lost: "upon that hint he spake," and was heard. He did not, it is true, although accredited as the wealthy owner of Dixonholme, and believed to be a most manageable and convenient sort of subject, escape sounding on the *extent* of his estate, and the number of his farms; to which he carelessly replied, that his estate was more extensive than most men's, the soil was rich, and the tenants many. That so good an opportunity might not be lost on either side, a quiet wedding,—an *agreeable surprise* at home,—and, then and there, a burst of nuptial splendour and festivity, were projected. Behold, therefore, Dixon and his gorgeous bride, like the sun shining on the edge of a wane-cloud, travelling homewards in the old family chariot, by a pleasant, easy journey of three days,—he the happiest of mortals, and she more and more alive to the pliant and available nature of her good man. Amongst those piquancies which served to season their conversation on the way, not the most trivial was the anticipation of the effect of this event upon Dauncey—the poor, but proud

Dauncey. On the third day, Dixon announced their approach to their journey's end; and, on reaching the brow of a hill which shewed spread below them a fine wooded valley, stretching out his hand and spreading it abroad, he exclaimed, "All that I now see is mine!" It is true that, observant of his word, his eyes were shut as he spoke: but although those of the lady were open, they were too eagerly fixed on the attractive scene before her, to allow her to notice the deception; and she involuntarily ejaculated the intensity of her exultation:

It was the bright warm season of Midsummer, and, as they descended through the fields, a busy scene surrounded them. Gates were thrown wide, wagons were rolling to and fro, and bands of merry people were tossing about or carrying home the hay, whose fragrance filled the whole atmosphere. There was an air of prosperity diffused over every person and thing, which inspired the lady with a suspicion that money was flowing from Dixon's easy good nature into a multitude of pockets; and she resolved that the stream should be suitably diminished. A variety of schemes of new and economical husbandry, of improved implements, and novel machinery on the most approved construction, were floating through her philosophical brain. Already the old-fashioned forks, rakes, and carts, had given way, in her thrifty imagination, to things of a more expeditious nature;—already the farmer had lost his free will, and was condemned to the predestination of prescribed modes of cultivating his soil;—already the cottager's cow, and his half dozen sheep, were driven from the common, which was turned to what, in the utilitarian system, is called a *good account*. There was, too, a curious mixture of merriment and respect in the salutations of the peasantry, which she attributed to the familiarity of Dixon: this was an evil also marked for abolition.

But the *denouement* was at hand. As she walked into the hall in proud self-gratulation, the first face which she beheld was that of Dauncey. A gentle nature would have shrunk from the encounter, but hers was not of that description; and her words immediately testified it. "*Your presence, sir, might have awaited a more suitable time!*" "Madam," replied Dauncey, with a dignity and gravity which startled



Give Emma truly



her, “I grieve to say, that I apprehend you to lie under a most melancholy deception. If, as appearances compel me to fear, you have been prevailed upon to marry this person through false representations, you are now to find that he is not only worthless but penniless.” “What! is he not Mr. Dixon of Dixonholme?” “He is, truly, Mr. Dixon; but this is not Dixonholme, nor is that manor now his property.” At these words a host of dreadful passions spread over her features a deathly hue, and shook with convulsive tremblings her frame from head to foot; but she stood, and struggling fiercely with her tyrannous feelings for the mastery, exclaimed, “Wretches! have you dared to practise upon me your infernal conspiracy? And thou,” turning to Dixon, “detestable monster! where is that estate thou boasted of as more extensive than most men’s?” “It is in the church-yard,” coolly replied Dixon; “and it is true, most men have but five-feet-ten of earth that can truly be called their own, and I have six-feet-two; and I still maintain that the soil is rich, and that the tenants are many.”

Most of this sage interpretation was lost upon the bride; for the violence of her agitation had terminated in hysterical insensibility. Dauncey, truly grieved for the unfortunate woman, selfish and selfishly ambitious as she was, exerted himself for her recovery, at the same time upbraiding Dixon with neglect of his pledge. Dixon sat himself quietly down to see the result, only replying to Dauncey’s charges with, “I’ve told no lies, Dauncey; I’ve told no lies!” But the lady revived—started up with the air and attitude of a fury—rushed from the house—mounted her carriage, and drove off. One glance only she cast back as she departed; and in that she beheld Dixon standing at the door, with a complacent grin on his countenance, and his long, lank figure nearly propping the lofty lintel.

Many years after this remarkable event, a gentleman passing near Mrs. Dixon’s ancestral residence made some inquiries on the subject of this history; and, strange as it may appear, he found that Dixon and his wife were living quietly together there:—he the same creature of fowling-pieces, fishing-rods, fragmental Latinity, and choice companionship,—

“Murmuring by the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.”

in all else a perfect nonentity,—his will never consulted, his name scarcely ever mentioned, even by their own work-people; but that of Madam Dixon a word of power, fear, and dominion, and herself one of those omnipotent personages without whose interference not a road is levelled, nor a corner of a field cut off, nor a poor man presumes to alter his pigsty; and at whose presence, as we believe Dr. Southey somewhere says, the household spaniel tucks his tail between its legs and sneaks out of the room.

It is suspected that her conviction of Dauncey's having planned this marriage was the salvation of Dixon, she being conscious that, if such was the truth, the greater her manifested mortification the more triumphant his revenge. Of Dauncey's subsequent history we have not been able to learn any particulars; but we hold him firmly to have been a man to whom a disingenuous stratagem was an impossibility.

THE POACHER'S PROGRESS.

WITHIN twenty miles of London, in a delightful neighbourhood, lies the pleasant village of Snobham. In this village live many wealthy people. The neighbourhood abounds with parks, woods, and moorlands ; and in the village, but still more on the skirts of the commons, abound also the habitations of a great number of poor people. Between the rich and the poor of this neighbourhood, however, as is so much the case all around the metropolis, there is very little intercourse. No two classes anywhere know so little of each other. The rich are either such as have made money in London, or in India, or other colonies, and have settled down there, as at once affording a charming country, and an easy distance from town ; or they are people who have houses and castles in distant parts of the kingdom, and occupy only these subordinate seats during the London season—that is, the duration of the parliamentary session.

On the edge of one of these said commons, where a cluster of wooden houses had been erected by a speculative carpenter, lived, amongst others, Tim Skipton. Tim was a young fellow naturally full of life and spirit, and, for a Surrey chopstick, intelligent. It is true he could neither read nor write, but he had a fund of native sense, which, under favourable circumstances, would have made him a superior and successful man. He was strong, active, and handsome.

In all the sports on the common, such as skittles, quoits, or leaping, Tim was ever one of the most distinguished. In the work-field he was equally adroit and efficient. None could swing a scythe, wield a sickle or a spade, load a hay or a corn wagon better, or fell a tree in less time. Tim then lived one of the most easy and cheerful lives of the place and class. He was greatly admired by the girls of the neighbourhood, and his society courted by the young men. He was naturally merry, generous, and light-hearted. If things had gone pretty smoothly with Tim, Tim would have gone on as smoothly. But his very attractions proved a mischief to him. His father and mother had no other children; therefore, with the united wages of father and son, they lived very fairly. But Tim was often induced to join a company at the public-house, where there was a famous skittle-ground, and the gaiety of the company there began to have a great charm for him. In fact, what other resources had he and his fellows? They were totally uneducated, and so were the women at home; therefore at home the men very seldom stayed, except to dig the garden occasionally, or feed the pig, if they had one; but in an evening, after the return from the field, you might see in all these villages the men generally at the public-houses, and the women solitary at home, or gossiping, if the weather were fine, at each other's doors.

Tim, too, got married pretty early, and within six years he found himself the father of no less than five children. For a time he and his wife had lived with his father and mother; but the old people were becoming infirm; therefore they turned out, and took a very small house in the wood just by, which was let rent free, on condition that the tenant saw that the gates leading in and out of the wood were kept properly shut, and damage from cattle on the common prevented. Tim had now seven of family to maintain out of his twelve shillings a week, and a rent of £9 a year to pay out of it, too. It began to be tight work. There was little surplus to spend at the village ale-house and skittle-ground; and Tim was soon obliged to run on a score there, while his wife at home was more and more complaining of the difficulty of getting bread enough and fuel enough for the family. Neither Tim's temper nor that of his wife grew

any the better for this state of things. The honeymoon of youth and early marriage was gone for ever; and what was to supply its place? The wife, with her five children about her, began to take in washing; and when Tim came home, instead of the quiet dry hearth there used to be, it was now damp with steam, and wet clothes lay about or hung about, and there were crying children that could not be attended to by the occupied mother, who was again about to add to their number. Tim would fain fly off from this scene to the Holly-bush, the ale-house; but there was a score on its walls, and nothing in his pockets to wipe it out with. But Tim was not worse off than the majority of his neighbours. Penury was the condition of them all. And now came winter. It came early and fierce, and stayed long. Intense frosts and deep snows began it, continued through it, and ended it, or allowed it to end only in March. Through all this time, the whole body of labourers, with the exception of some half dozen, were totally unemployed. There was nothing doing by the farmers but thrashing—and that was done rapidly by machine—and foddering the cattle in the yards. The men sat at home or lounged about, as disconsolate as fowls on a rainy day. But on what were they to live? Their summer's wages only sufficient, and that barely, for their summer's livelihood—for this long dreary time there was absolutely nothing. The men went out, when the weather would permit, and pulled down rotten branches from the fir woods on the commons with long hooks, for fuel, or stubbed up the stumps of the trees which had been felled. But for the greater part of the time the ground was buried in snow, or was as hard as iron with frost. But coal they could not buy at all, and without wood they must perish of cold in their wooden houses.

In these circumstances, what were the people to do? Their fathers would at once have gone to the parish for relief till the weather broke up again; but now, there was the new Poor Law staring them in the face, and the great Union at some half dozen miles distance. If they went to ask for temporary relief, they knew, for they had tried it, what would be the answer; it would be, "If you want relief you must come in." And if they went in, what then? Why then their little furniture would be all sold up, and they

should be ruined for ever. When spring came, how were they to re-commence housekeeping? How were they to repurchase sufficient furniture for even their simple wants? That which they had, had been bought out of the careful savings of unencumbered youth; now they could with as stern a struggle only find food for the day. It was in vain to reason with parish officer or guardian. *Guardian of the poor!* gross misnomer! The Poor Law was, at that time, in the heyday of its political economy wisdom, and had but two words—"Come in!"

But so well did the poor know that that "come in" was a "take in" of the most fatal kind,—a "take in and done for" affair, that they were prepared to endure any thing before they would resort to it. They were not prepared to sell their whole stock and chance in life for a *temporary* accommodation, and to become pauperised for ever for a winter's assistance. They therefore stuck to famine and their wretched houses, and cursed the hard-heartedness of a Christian country. It is not to be supposed, that, as they saw, on winter's evenings, the carriages of the rich roll by them, with blazing lamps, and servants well wrapped up in many-caped coats, and knew that light and warmth and luxury were abounding in their houses, that this tended at all to promote ideas of justice and gentleness in their minds, or to imbue them with the charity inculcated by the Christian religion. "If they don't care for us, why should we care for them?" was the language that began to be frequent amongst the poor of Snobham; and the eyes of the young men began to be turned towards the woods and parks that lay all around, and the idea of hares running there in thousands, that might produce miracles of peace amongst their crying children, became very predominant.

There were, in fact, strong bands of poachers on foot, and Tim was not long in joining them. He was young, active, full of spirit in whatever he undertook, and he was now strongly embittered against what he termed the heartless gentry. Tim was soon, therefore, at the head of half a score who used to frequent the Holly Bush. They pursued the game in the night, and having nothing to do in the day, could thus take plenty of rest. By this means the cottages on the common were chiefly supplied with food; not, in fact,

with a constant diet of hares and pheasants, but with the cash which it brought from the London market. Why don't gentlemen who have game-preserves take the same precaution against hungry peasants as they do against weasels and hawks, and, as they cannot shoot them, see that they are employed and fed? But the consumption of game to this extent did not long escape the observation of the keepers. Severe as the weather was, they began to watch, and were not long in meeting with the poachers, but perceived that they were too strong to engage with them of themselves. Speedily they were strengthened by forces calculated to cope with the forces of the poachers. They met in the woods, and fought. There were two of the keepers' party shot on the spot, and others wounded. The rest made their escape; and whether any of the poachers were wounded, it could not be ascertained; but none were killed, for none of the peasantry of the country round were missing. The proprietors of the different estates were now on the alert. The woods were more assiduously watched; the number of watchers was from week to week augmented: but this did not diminish the consumption of the game. Hunger, deadly and increasing hunger, was in every peasant's cottage, and there was no relief except the ruinous relief of the Union, which was like buying ease in an agonizing disease with a death draught of laudanum.

The poachers, therefore, only extended their marauding expeditions to more distant scenes for awhile, till the nearer keepers were put off their guard, when sudden inroads were made into their territories again, and whole cartloads of hares swept off in a night. Again the deadly encounters took place, and the whole kingdom was horrified by the relations of these in the newspapers. They were read and exclaimed over as horrible, and laid down again; and perhaps some Joseph Hume, or John Bright, in parliament, asked the Home Secretary if he had noticed these things, and what remedy he proposed, to which he gave a very misty answer: and there it ended. The war of the woods went on; terrible deeds were done, and the spirits of the rich and poor were embittered against each other; as if they were natural enemies, instead of the children of one Divine Parent, and the followers of the same

Christ. This warfare had progressed so successfully before the winter I speak of was over, that the expenses of the landed proprietors for night-watchers, and defence of their game, amounted to a sum that would have kept the poor in the greatest comfort in their respective parishes ; and these, poor in the meantime, had come to regard these proprietors as tyrants, with hearts of stone. The woods were now so well and strongly watched, that nothing but the most bloody conflicts could enable the poachers to carry on their practices ; but carried on they must be, or their families must perish. The cry on their hearths was still, " Give us bread, and give us fuel, or we shall be frozen to death ! The cry of the Union, and the guardians of the poor, was still, " Come in, and we will sell you up." At this crisis the minds of the poachers of Snobham became more dark and fierce than ever. As they returned at midnight from unsuccessful reconnoitering of the woods, where they perceived their foes in great force, and the sheep would start up from some sheltered hollow, and scour away in alarm, a fellow at Tim's elbow whispered—

" And where's the difference between these four-legged animals and those that we have gone after to-night ?"

" Difference !" said Tim, to whom such an idea had never occurred ; " Why man, these are property ; nay, the deuce, Jem, I'm no sheep-stealer, nor mean to be, come what will."

" But why not, Tim ?" retorted the man. " Live we must ; and if not on hare, why then on mutton, I say. Which are better—mer or sheep ? Is it fitting that our children die of hunger, and these fellows, who refuse us a shilling till we get work again, have hares in the woods, and sheep in the fields, and we must neither touch a tuft of fur, nor a lock of wool ? no—the devil—say I."

Tim Skipton revolted at the idea of being a sheep-stealer, though he actually gloried in being a poacher, and thought it quite heroic, and a prosecution of true justice ; but as they went homewards, he found the arguments of his companions gradually taking the other side. Three days after, the whole parish was startled with the news, that three sheep had been slaughtered in a croft close to the village, and the bodies carried off, though the skins were left behind. They turned out to be the butcher's ; and he being

a very active and zealous man of business, was soon seen, attended by constables, and armed with a search-warrant, paying a domiciliary visit to the huts on the common. They had passed through two or three of them, when a sudden idea seemed to strike the butcher, who was a jolly, well-fed, and well-disposed man. When they were in the next cottage, he went straight into the pantry, and looking in at the bare shelves, he asked the wife, "Where are your provisions? Where is your bread? Where are your potatoes?"

"You see all on those shelves that we have, sir," replied the poor woman, whose thin and ghastly features bore testimony to the dreadful truth of her words.

"What!" said the butcher, "You don't say so! Have you nothing at all to eat in the house?"

"No, sir; nor have had these two days. God knows we have not had a mouthful of bread this morning, nor know where it is to come from."

"And have you no fire this terrible weather?"

"Oh, no! how could we, how can we, have fire, when coals are half-a-crown a hundred, and the snow is three feet deep in the woods?"

"But why don't you go to the parish, then? You must not be lost."

"But we shall be lost if we go there. They will sell up all our bits of things, and then what is to become of us in spring? No, sir, we may as well die this winter as another; and the sooner the better, for there seems to be no bowels of compassion left in this country; and we are looked on as an encumbrance."

"But it is rank madness, woman," replied the butcher, "to talk in that way. You ought to get food, any how, for yourself and children."

"Well, sir," said the woman, meekly, "I suppose those who killed your sheep thought so; but we can neither get ours that way, or by going to the Union, to be turned out at spring, without house, home, or any stool to sit on."

The butcher seemed struck with a serious thought: he went on with his search from house to house; but the scenes which met him made him only the more astonished. There was not a house with a loaf or a fire. There were women wasted to skeletons, and meagre men sitting, sunk,

as it were, in the paralyzing stupor of despair. There were children, like little old men and women, famished, past being clamorous, and wearing the patient aspect of approaching inanition. There was fever doing its burning work on couch and in bed; and its fire was the only fire to be found.

The good man, horrified by what he saw, hastily took his leave, abandoning his search, and hurrying home took a piece of paper, and wrote down, "Subscription List for the Starving Poor," and headed it with five pounds. With this he set forth, and proceeded to the nearest house of the wealthy. Here his story excited the utmost wonder and compassion; for, take the heart out of its conventionalities, and it is a human heart still. The butcher's appeal was instantly and everywhere responded to; and while the subscription was going on, a piece of meat, a loaf, and a quantity of potatoes, were going to every cottage; and a load of coals progressed from house to house, leaving at each a sack, to cook the mealy potatoes with. The whole village and neighbourhood seemed roused, as it were, out of a dream; and food, fire, and warm articles of clothing, were mustered up in great quantities, and distributed; and different gentlemen commenced the daily manufacture of soup for the poor.

The misery was alleviated. Those in fever were attended gratuitously by the surgeon, and every body breathed all the more freely for having given to the heart the refreshment of humanity. Time went on; the stolen sheep, and the dismal discovery of the destitution which the theft led to, were less and less thought of. Every body spoke with delight of the benevolence of the well-to-do people of Snobham. All were supposed to be cured, and set right. But was it so? Far from it. The winter continued, and drove its reign into the very heart of spring. The Union, and the guardians of the poor, had never altered their system; the farmers had not yet set to work any more labourers; the coals were burnt, the subscription exhausted, and the cottages, with the exception of the daily dole of soup from the great houses, were as destitute as ever. The wealthy, living in the remembrance of their benevolence, forgot that one act does not dissipate fixed causes, any more than one pill will cure a chronic disease. They thought all was right

now, because they had set all right two months before ; and because in their own houses there was no pressure of distress to remind them of such a thing anywhere else.

The parish of Snobham was, therefore, once more unexpectedly electrified by the news of a desperate encounter in the neighbouring woods between the keepers and the poachers, in which three keepers were killed, and five poachers captured. And these five poachers turned out to be five of the very cottagers of Snobham who had been so generously relieved by this very winter subscription. On this, nothing could exceed the indignant amazement of the public. "What!" the very men so generously assisted by their neighbours!—who had had coals, bread, potatoes, meat, and soup! What! the very people so kindly attended to by the doctor, and clothed by the ladies! What! all that linen, those stockings, and those blankets! Ungrateful wretches! hopeless, incurable generation! The poor of Snobham were given up as a most worthless race, destitute of every grateful sentiment, and too proud to go into a Union, but not to steal.

From that hour the stream of charity at Snobham was frozen for ever. No one thought of recommending the parish authorities to adopt the plan of a little weekly relief at this season, till the weather broke up :—none but a half-pay officer, who had lately come thither, and he recommended it in vain. He made an effort once—he wrote to the Commissioners at Somerset House to relax the rigour of the law, and grant permission to the relieving officers to give outdoor relief. It was the worst period of the reign of those Somerset House monarchs ; when the wisdom of political economy was strong in them. The reply was short : the request could not be complied with—it would be a dangerous exception.

So, misery and poaching went on. The five men who were concerned in the affray in the woods were transported for life ; and Tim Skipton, who was of the party, but escaped detection, now deprived of his old companions, fell by necessity into the association of others. These were a worse and more desperate set. They were great frequenters of the Holly Bush, where they caroused till late at night, and then issued forth in a state of brutal phrensy, capable of the most san-

guinary deeds. The spirit of revenge was strong in them on account of their comrades, as they called them, who were transported. These men included in their number the sheep-killers of the former part of the winter. They were guilty of still more—of various burglaries in different parts of the neighbourhood; and Tim Skipton, now driven by progressive circumstances into their constant company, was in for whatever they might undertake. The once handsome, light-hearted youth, had now a dark and downward look. His whiskers and hair were thick and wild; his dress resembled that of a shabby keeper—his features were stamped with the indefinable character of the scamp. At home a swarm of dirty children and a wife grown wiry in her temper, and acid in her words, from constant suffering and contention with hunger and hungry children, and the refusal of all her rich customers to give her any more washing, made him as surly and glum as the darkest night on which he pursued his now-established practices. There were blows and curses between the married pair, kicks and cuffs to the screaming children, that were enough to make the place loathsome to the vilest creature in the human form.

After one of these scenes, Tim Skipton sallied forth one night, and in less than half an hour after was down in the depths of a wood that skirted the most sullen portion of the sullen Mole. A ridge of a sort of clayey sand rose high on one side above this hollow wood, and the dark, sluggish river, ran at its feet. In the hollow descent of this crumbly sort of cliff, ancient and ivy-covered trees spread a double gloom. But it was a place where the gang usually met, as at once near and obscure; and here they had agreed to meet to-night. Tim Skipton, excited by the quarrel at home, and by the spirits he had taken in passing the Holly Bush, strode on through the Egyptian darkness of this wood, without the care usual on such occasions. The dead sticks beneath his feet cracked as he passed, without his noticing them. He pushed through bush and briar, and felt neither rend nor scratch. He had now reached the brink of the river, and advanced towards a huge hollow tree, where they usually made their rendezvous. A low whistle, which he gave when a few yards off, was answered in the same manner; and, coming forward to the entrance of the tree, whose

interior cavity was capacious enough to hold half a dozen men, he was suddenly seized by the collar by no feeble hands.

"Hallo! there, Joe; hallo! Jem! hands off, no joking there: I am not in the humour!"

"Nor we neither," replied two voices at once, which he recognised as not those of his comrades, but of the keepers. In an instant, down went his gun: he grappled with his antagonists. There were two of them, who had simultaneously seized on him, he being well seen by them, who had been watching some time; while he, coming suddenly into the pitchy darkness, could see nothing. But with an abrupt whirl he flung off one of his assailants, and grasped the body of the other with the strain of a boa-constrictor, to raise him from the ground. But his opponent was not so lightly overthrown, and the struggle became at once violent and desperate. The two heaved and writhed to and fro, amid oaths and curses from the fallen keepers behind. The bushes were trodden down, the dead boughs crashed around them, and in the next moment down went the combatants together—it was into the river! There was a desperate splash, and all was silent.

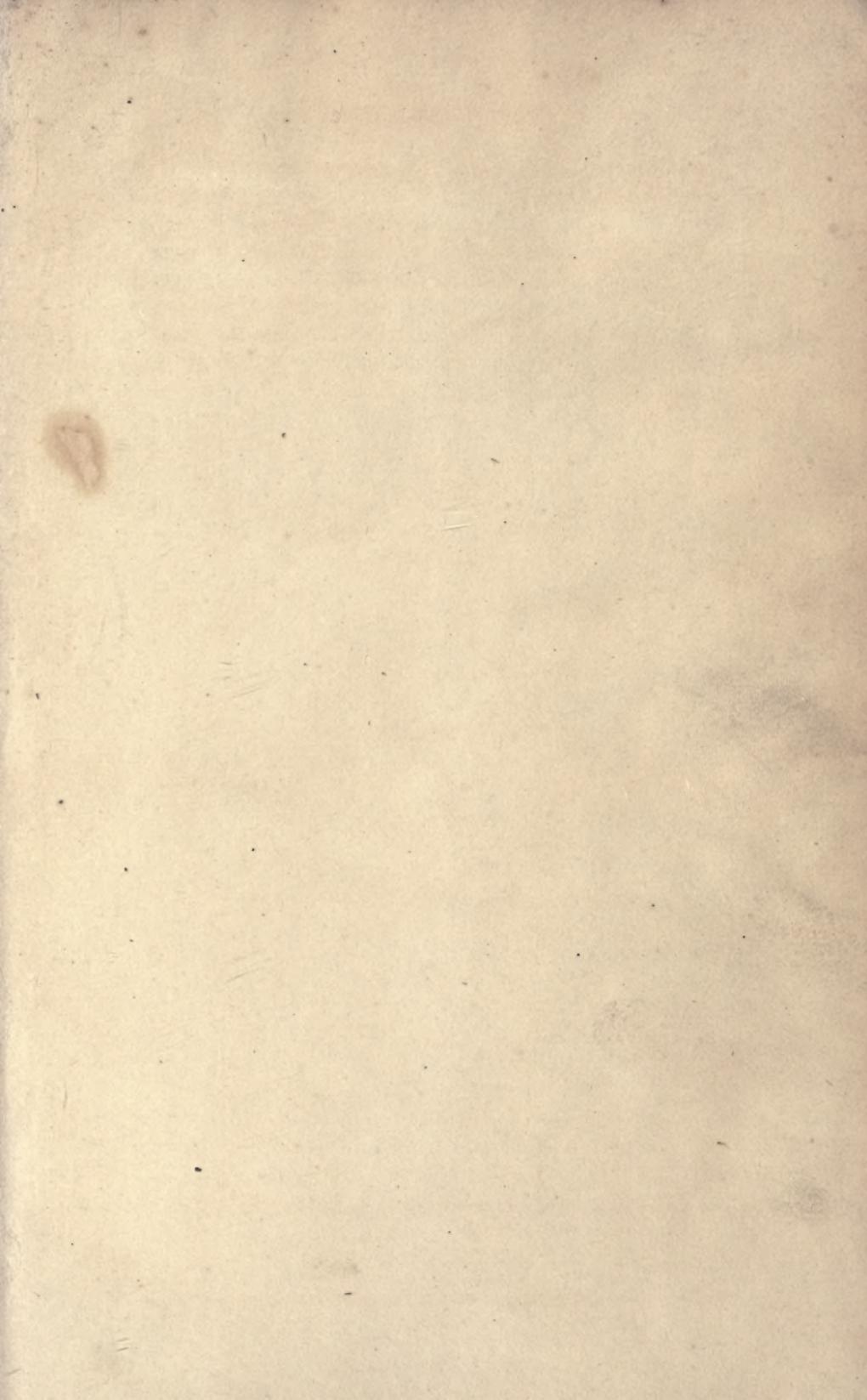
Several dark forms advanced, and gazed intently from the gloomy bank, on the gloomy and scarcely-visible stream—but there was no further sound or motion.

"They are drowned, by G—d!" said a deep voice; and then there was another pause, and then a mingled clamour of tongues full of wonder and terror, and the party rushed hastily away up the wood.

The next day a strange rumour began to run about Snobham and its commons,—that a keeper and a poacher were drowned in Sandy-side wood, and the wife of Tim Skipton was seen flying across the common in that direction, followed by a troop of shrieking children. The current of the population speedily set in in that direction, and before an hour was over, the bodies of Tim Skipton, and a well-known keeper, famous for his muscular strength and dare-devil courage, were brought up by the drags, clasped as firmly in each other's arms, and with the same air of defiance with which they had, no doubt, plunged unexpectedly together into the sullen Mole.

Here was an end of the poacher's progress! The man who, with moderate wages, and a humane spirit of necessary relief in the depth of winter, might have lived a respectable, and comparatively happy man—had lived and died thus; and six families, including the men transported, were thrown permanently on the parish for full support, when a partial assistance, bestowed in the season of absolute need, would have left these men still able and willing to labour for them whenever labour was to be had.

THE END.



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